

THE BIRTH OF THE GODS

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THE BIRTH OF THE GODS

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INTRODUCTION



DURING the excavations conducted by the great English archæologist Sir Arthur Evans, at the Knossos Palace—the Labyrinth—in the Island of Crete, a cross of fine grained dark marble was found, and a priest of the Greek Orthodox Church who happened to be present reverently worshipped it, refusing to believe that it was not a Christian cross, but some other, earlier by three thousand years than the cross of the Calvary¹

Modern scholars would have explained to the priest that the cross is nothing other than the ancient symbol of the sun, a simplified sign of the star, the primitive *svastika*, or the cross-shaped handle of the gouge with which the Brahmins obtain from the dry wood a spark of the holy fire—the god Agni. And perhaps the simple-hearted priest would have been grieved, but he might have found comfort in St. Clement of Alexandria, according to whom “the barbarian and Hellenic philosophy has torn off a fragment of eternal truth from the

¹ *The Palace of Minos at Knossos*, by Sir Arthur Evans,
p 517

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theology of the ever-living Word" (*Stromata* 1. 13). And St. Paul confirms it all these, he says, "are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ" (Col. 11 17) Paul is speaking of prophecies concerning the Messiah, but could not the same be said about the prophecies of that other Bible—the world's history?

The historical development of mankind is a mystery-play, a sacrament of crucifixion in which all the peoples take part. The path from Bethlehem to Calvary is the path of all "pagans"—of all pre-Christian humanity. The peoples are many, but the mystery is one—the mystery of God who dies and rises again from the dead. The myth of the suffering God refers not to an event that happened once, but to an event which is happening always and is lived over again and again in the life of the world and of mankind. "Universal history is an æon, the eternal content of which, the beginning and the end, the cause and the aim, is Christ" (Schelling). The human world is the geometrical space in which the Body of Christ is being formed.

Osiris of Egypt, Tammuz of Babylon, Adonis of Canaan and the Ægean Islands, Attis of Asia Minor, Dionysos of Greece—all these contain Him. They are the shadows, and the body is of Him.

Christ is concealed in paganism and revealed

in Christianity Christianity is the revelation, the apocalypse of paganism The blind feel the sun though they cannot see it, the Christ of paganism is the sun of the blind.

"The enormous difference between Christianity and paganism lies in the fact that the person of Christ is *historically real*" (Schelling). Modern atheistic scholars have grasped this thoroughly, and are doing their utmost to destroy the historical personality of Christ But to destroy it means to destroy universal history, for the whole of it is *about Him*

"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness" (Luke 111 1-2) This is the geometrical point that unites the Body to the shadow The mystery of the suffering God stretching throughout the ages falls at the feet of Christ

If there was no Christ, there is no Christianity; it is then as much of a "myth" as paganism. But if Christ *has been*, His shadow reflected back upon the whole of mankind to the very beginning of time is an historical miracle fatal to those who would destroy Him. It may be that Christendom will not renounce Christ so easily as many people think. But in the struggle that is to come we cannot conquer alone. we must call to our aid the whole of mankind, not only of the present day, but also of the past—the

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Christians before Christ. Such is the meaning of this book.

Its continuation, at which I am now working, is called *Akhnaton, the Joy of the Sun*. Akhnaton, the greatest of the kings of Egypt, is well described by the American historian J. H. Breasted as "the first individual in history"

"Thou, Father, art in my heart. There is no other who knoweth Thee except me, Thy son," is the hieroglyphic inscription on one of the tombs in Tell-el-Amarna. It was he who said this—Akhnaton, almost a contemporary of Moses and perhaps no lesser a prophet than Moses. These words show how near to Christ this "pagan" was

When the Mother with the Babe fled to Egypt, wearied by the day's journey, did she not rest in the shadow of the Pyramids, at the foot of the Sphinx? Christ was all that Egypt had been waiting for, and all its thoughts were of Him—of God who came to the earth in order to die and to rise from the dead.

This is the meaning of the *Birth of the Gods*—the birth of God

D. MEREZHKOVSKY.

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THE MOTHER OF THE GODS

A

THE BIRTH OF THE GODS

THE MOTHER OF THE GODS

I



B-VAD. Ab—Father, vad—love.
The Father is love This is what
is written on the talisman ”
“What does it mean ?”
“I don’t know . . . My
mother put it round my neck
and I have never taken it off since; it has
preserved me all my life It saved me from
the beast just now When the boar rushed out
of the reeds and knocked me down, I thought
of my knife, but the sheath was empty. There
I lay under the creature’s belly, and it snorted
over me, trying to get at my throat with its
tusk. It is a good thing it caught me lower
down—by the collar-bone—had it been a little
higher I should have been done for I remem-
bered the talisman; with one hand I felt it on
my breast as I whispered, ‘Ab-vad,’ and with
the other fumbled for the knife in the grass;
I must have dropped it as I fell I seized my
chance, raised myself a little and thrust the
knife up to the hilt into the beast’s belly.”

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"The talisman saved you and you saved me"

"I never thought of you And even if I have saved you, of what profit is it to me? You know we merchants think of nothing but profit"

"Wait a little, merchant, may be there will be profit . " He could not see her face, but he heard from her voice she was smiling so kindly that though he knew happiness was not to be, yet his heart stood still with happiness

Tammuzadad, son of Ishtarraman, a Babylonian, and Dio, daughter of Aridoel, a Cretan, were walking along a forest-road that led from Mount Ida to Knossos, the capital of Crete. The road—two ruts in the reddish clay—had been made by the creaking wheels of the woodcutters' wagons that carried timber—pine and cedar for masts—from the Mountain to the wharves of the Knossos harbour

They were returning from hunting wild bulls, and killed the boar unexpectedly it rushed at them of its own accord, disturbed by the hounds. The sacred games of bulls took place at the Knossos amphitheatre to the glory of the Bull. Every spring hunters and huntresses went to the Mountain to catch them. There, on sweet verdant pastures, beside the icy running streams, grazed the savage, indomitable bulls, heavy and massive, broad-browed, big-horned, monstrously beautiful—the first-fruits of creation, the god-like sons of Mother Earth. They were caught,

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like birds, with nets of thick ropes which were placed in forest thickets along the tracks made by the animals going to drink

It was spring in the valleys, but here, on the Mountain, it was still winter. A piercingly cold wind was blowing from snow-covered Ida. The swiftly-moving clouds were so low that they seemed to touch the tops of the pine-trees.

Wet snow was falling, and rain. It was growing dark.

But spring was in the winter twilight, also. Lilies of the valley were pushing through the leaf-mould, violets were blooming in the moss, the cuckoo was calling as though it too knew that happiness was not to be and yet was weeping with happiness.

"Yes, the talisman has saved me from everything," he began again, "from fire, from knife, from poison and wild beast, from one thing only it has not saved me. . . ."

"From what?" she asked. He did not answer, and she understood: "From you!"

Both were wrapped in skins of animals: he in a tawny lion-skin with the muzzle on the head by way of helmet, she in a grey wolf-skin with a helmet of weasel. Both had hunter's spears in their hands, bows and arrows behind their backs. It was hard to tell the man from the woman.

Taking the lion's muzzle off his head, he put his hand on his neck.

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"Does it hurt?" she asked.

"Not much. It is a mere scratch. When I was a shepherd in Halihalbat I used to hunt lions with nothing but a cudgel. Only once a lioness that had just had her young wounded me; I still have the trace of her claws on my back. But I was younger then and more vigorous."

She looked at him anxiously.

"The bandage has slipped off. Let me put it right."

"No, you can't do it here in the forest! We shall soon be home, shall we not?"

"Yes," she answered uncertainly.

"Do you know the way? We shall not get lost? What a wild place this is! . . Is it the sea making that noise?"

"No, the pines. The noise of the pines sounds like the sea." And after a silence she repeated again, as though thinking her own thoughts:

"What does it mean then, 'The Father is love'? Who is the Father? God?"

"I don't know. I have been repeating it for forty years, but I do not know. The word of God is a sealed vessel; who knows what is within? And perhaps we ought not to know: if we knew, we should die."

"So be it, if we could only know!"

And both were silent, listening to the murmur

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of the pines—the sound of the invisible sea—of that sea, perhaps, which is beating against all earthly shores with its unearthly waves, murmuring with the murmur of death.

“In Ur of the Chaldees,” he began, and stopped. As he uttered the name of his native city he suddenly felt that he hated everything here—the low clouds, the wet snow, the sickly-sweet smell of pine-needles, the melancholy call of the cuckoo and the murmur of the pines—the murmur of death, and he hated her too, the loved one. It was because of her that he would never return to his own country, would die in a strange land, a homeless wanderer—perish like a dog on the roadside.

“In Ur of the Chaldees,” he went on, “my father was a priest of Sin, the god of the moon. He wanted to teach me too the divine mysteries, but I did not listen to him; I was thinking of other things then. But still I have learnt a few things This is what is written on the ancient tablets about the creation of man. Will you understand it in our tongue?”

“Yes”

“Listen, then:

Gods have called in the goddess
Mamu, the wise one, the Helper”

“Mami?” she asked, in surprise. “You have Mamı and we have Ma. The same name?”

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"Yes Perhaps she is everywhere the same
All men, like children, call her 'Mami!'

Gods called in the goddess
Mami the wise one the Helper
'Thou one single maternal flesh
Canst create the world of men'
Then Mami opened her lips
And spake to the great gods
I cannot do it alone

What comes after cannot be deciphered, the tablet is broken And in the end it says

Fa the Father opened his lips
And spake to the great gods
'God has to be slain' he said
'With the divine flesh and blood
Mami must mix the clay'

And this was what the gods did they created man out of the flesh and blood of the God who had been slain "

"So you have it, too?" she asked, still more surprised

"Yes, we have it, too, God died that man might live Perhaps this is the meaning of 'The Father is love'?"

"That's it, that's it! Why did you say, then, you did not know?" From under the weasel helmet he saw her eyes shine—prophetic stars, terribly distant, terribly near—and again he felt that the alien country was his native land, he would die for her, the loved and hated one,

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would perish like a dog on the roadside—and find happiness

“Why did you say you did not know?” she repeated

“I do not know, I know nothing, girl,” he said with a bitter smile “Perhaps it is so, and perhaps it is not Man knows as little about God as a worm knows about man How can a trembling creature fathom the ways of God? Everything is double It is one thing in heaven and another on earth To judge by the earth God does not love man overmuch As it says in the song of Lamentation

I waited for succour but no one helped me
I wept but no one comforted me
I cried out—and no one answered

“The same thing befalls the good and the evil we shall die and be like water that is spilt upon the ground and cannot be gathered again”

“Why do you talk in this way?”

“In what way?”

“As though there were nothing”

“But what is there? You know best—you are a priestess, you know how to prophesy and tell the future, and I am a merchant I only know how to count Twice two are four—that’s death If a man dies he lies down and never gets up again”

“And is that all?”

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"It is all"

"And you want nothing more?"

"Of course I want more! I want two and two to make five, but it won't, you see And about the creation of the world another thing has been said, too

You seek life but you shall not find it
When Gods created men
They kept life for themselves
But to men they apportioned death

Everything is double Choose what you like either twice two make five—life, or twice two make four—death "

After a silence he asked

"And is it true, girl, that in your island here they offer human sacrifices—that fathers kill their firstborn?"

"Don't! One must not speak of this!" she whispered with terror

"It cannot be said, but it may be done?"

"Hold your peace, you godless man! If you say another word I am your friend no longer," she said, so sternly and peremptorily that he remained silent

II

THEY had left the road long before and were walking along an overgrown path that looked like a track made by animals All of a sudden

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they came to a forest glade, sheltered on all sides by rocks it was warm and still In the middle of the glade stood an almond-tree in blossom, rosy under the white snow in the dim twilight

“But perhaps you have made a mistake in your reckoning, merchant, and ‘twice two make four’ is not everything?” she asked, glancing at the almond-tree

“Perhaps I have” He smiled bitterly again “Listen, girl A fool said to a wise man, ‘Are all things under the sun evil? Is there nothing good?’ And the wise man answered the fool, ‘There is good also’ ‘What is good?’ ‘Why, this to smash our heads and throw us both into the river’”

“That’s a fine answer!” she cried, laughing gaily

He too glanced at the tree and understood he with his grief was for the laughing girl just what the wet snow was for the rosy flowers

“Wait a minute where have we come to?” She looked round “I don’t seem to remember this glade”

“I knew we should lose our way! Why did you turn off the road?”

“I wanted to find a short cut”

“A short cut indeed! Ah, you foolish creature! Looking for the ways of heaven we have lost the one on earth And night is upon us ”

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He sat down on the trunk of a fallen pine-tree, and with the palm of his hand wiped the perspiration off his brow

She was not thinking of herself, she was used to facing hardships when hunting, and would have spent the night in the forest as comfortably as in her own home. But she saw he was tired and weak from the wound. After thinking a little she made up her mind.

"Don't worry, we shall find shelter for the night."

"In a bear's den, I suppose?"

"No, with Her"

He understood "with Her" meant with the Mother. Her name was so holy that it was hardly ever uttered.

"Where is She?"

"Not far from here"

"How do you know?"

Without speaking she pointed to a little cross—Her holy symbol—deeply carved in the bark of a pine-tree. On another tree, a little farther, there was a cross, too, and also on a third one. Like signposts they pointed the way to Her.

Following the marks they entered a ravine—the bed of a dried-up stream, so thickly covered with purple heather and rust-coloured bracken that one could not see the ground under one's feet. Dio was walking in front. She drew back suddenly—she had held herself back just in time.

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on the brink of a precipice On the other side of it, in the whitish mist of the evening, mountains rose up like a bank of cloud, and high above them, as though standing apart, loomed the white spectre of snow-clad Mount Ida—the Great Mother herself, the unutterable Ma

It seemed as though the path could not lead any farther But a guiding cross was carefully drawn in red colour on the perpendicular rock night over the abyss Walking round the projecting rock, along the very edge of the precipice, they came to a semicircular platform surrounded with blocks of stone It was the holy enclosure opposite the entrance to the Mother's cave

A black stone, rounded on the top like an acorn, stood in the middle of the terrace It was said that it had fallen from the sky like a meteor and shone with starry brilliance in the night It was a holy stone—Bethel God dwelt in it

Dio went through the gate into the enclosure She came up to the stone, put her arms round it and kissed it Then she returned to Tam-muzadad and said

“Come in With me you may” And, taking him by the hand, she led him into the enclosure There was a brass door in the wall Dio knocked No one answered

“The Bees must have gone to the town,” she

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said Priestesses of the Mother were called the Bees, and Dio herself was a Bee

The door was never locked fear of God protected the sanctuary Opening it, they passed through a narrow passage into a warm cave, smelling of holy saffron and incense

In the dim light falling through the half-open door they saw a bronze tripod—an altar of incense, with the red embers glowing under a layer of ashes Dio blew up the fire and threw some dry twigs upon it They blazed and the cave was lighted up

Behind the altar of incense was an altar of libations—a black steatite tablet, supported by slender pillars, with three cuplike indentations for water, milk and honey—water for the Father, milk for the Son, honey for the Mother

Farther on, in the depths of the cave, rose up two enormous bulls' horns made of clay, a bronze double-edged axe, with a handle of bronze, was placed between them, and its brightly polished surface shone with the reflection of the flames This holy axe, *Labra* was the symbol of the heavenly Bull—the Son who had been slain, the lightning axe of the Father cuts through the cloud—the Bull—in order that with its sacrificial blood—the rain—it might feed the Mother Earth

And in the innermost recess stood a small idol of clay, of immemorial antiquity, a monster

with a bird's beak instead of a face, queer little stumps, like chicken's wings, instead of arms, huge circular earrings in the huge ears, red points to mark the breasts and the black triangle, symbolic of the womb, to show its sex

In the cave Tammuzadad and Dio took off the animal-skins they had been wearing

He was dressed in a long Babylonian robe, something like a priest's vestment, made of dark purple wool with gold embroidery repeating the pattern of the Tree of Life between two Cherubim His black beard, tinged with grey, was in symmetrical tiers of small curls, which had become untwisted and disarranged with the damp and looked somewhat absurd and pitiful He was short, thickset and broad-shouldered His face, sunburnt and weather-beaten like a seaman's, with pronounced features and an intelligent, unkind smile that seemed frozen upon his lips, was plain But sometimes he smiled an unexpectedly childlike smile and, all at once, a mask seemed to fall off revealing another face, kind and simple

She wore the Cretan pleated skirt, widening like a bell towards the hem and rounded upon each leg in a way that suggested a man's trousers, her waist was tightly held in by a thick padded leather belt that seemed to cut her in two, the upper part of the body was covered with a tight-fitting tunic of thin

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gold-coloured material like the outer skin of a dried onion, in front the dress was cut down to the waist, leaving the breasts bare

When the flame blazed up on the altar Dio raised her arms, stretching her hands, palms upwards, towards the monstrous little idol in the depths of the cave, then she brought them to her forehead, joining them over the brows as though to shelter the eyes from too bright a light, she repeated the movement three times, saying a prayer in the ancient sacred tongue Tammuzadad did not know it well, but still he understood that she was praying to the Mother

“Save, defend, and have mercy upon all thy children, O Mother!”

He was surprised to recognise almost the same prayer which his mother taught him as a child, and it was this prayer she repeated when she put round his neck the carnelian talisman tablet with the half-effaced characters of the ancient inscription, “The Father is love”

III

WHEN she had finished praying, Dio pointed to two heaps of dry leaves covered with sheepskins, at the two opposite walls of the cave—probably the beds of the Bees who lived here

“Here is a night’s shelter for you!”

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He looked at her in surprise, without speaking did she not understand what she was doing, or did she think that under the Mother's holy protection she was safe from everything?

Then, making him sit down on an oak-tree stump, she took out of her hunting-bag all that was necessary for dressing his wound, fetched some water from a spring at the end of the cavern, heated it in a copper basin on the embers of the altar, washed the wound, sprinkled it with some herbs that soothed the pain, and bandaged it with a piece of clean linen She was skilled in the art of healing, as were all the Bees

Her fingers scarcely touched the wound But he turned pale and clenched his teeth

“Lilith! Lilith!” he muttered, as though in delirium

“What are you murmuring?” she asked He made no answer, but clenched his teeth more tightly

Lilith was a seductively beautiful Babylonian demon that sucked at night the blood of sleeping youths and maidens and was herself neither male nor female—a Youth and a Maiden at the same time

Young girls often resemble boys But in the case of Dio it was more than resemblance Ridiculous though it was, he did not know at times whom it was he loved—*her* or *him* He saw

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the bare bosom of a woman and still he did not know

Oh, this body, much too slender and boyishly graceful, the narrow hips, the angular movements, the rebellious curls of bluish-black hair, cut much too short, the colour in the cheeks, dark-skinned like a boy's, and girlishly tender, the colour of the rosy almond-blossom in the gathering dusk, and the darkish down on the upper lip—an absurd little moustache, to him not absurd but terrible! Neither he nor she—both he and she together—Lilith, Lilith!

Sometimes he wanted to ask her point blank "What are you?" And it was not merely because it would be ridiculous that he did not ask "Whosoever lifteth the veil from my face shall die," says the Babylonian goddess Ishtar, the morning and evening Star of love, Wife at sunset, Husband at dawn—Husband and Wife together It frightened him to learn what she was to know was to die

Dio took out of her bag and placed on the table (also a tree-stump, higher than the first) two glass flasks, one with wine and the other with olive oil, bread, cheese, dried fruit and, for him, a piece of smoked venison She did not eat meat the priestesses of the Mother partook of nothing that had breath

She pressed him to eat, but he refused everything, and only drank a cup of cold water

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greedily But she ate for two, like a real huntress

"We shall not lose our way now," she chatted gaily "The road is quite near here At dawn our people will come from the Mountain They have two carts one is for the bull and you can have the other We will go back to the town with them But why are you so depressed? What are you thinking of?"

"Of nothing at all You smell of saffron—'sweet is the breath of winter saffron'—that comes in one of your songs, doesn't it? It is the sacred scent of the Bees, isn't it?"

"Yes Don't you like it?"

"It's all right"

He took out of the sheath the knife with which he had killed the boar He looked to see if there were any bloodstains on it He rubbed it with a cloth to clean it The iron shone with a dull brilliance

"Is black bronze stronger than yellow?" she asked There was no iron in Crete and there was no word for it

"Yes, stronger and more pliable And if it is made white-hot and put in water, it will be stronger still and bend like a willow-rod without breaking"

"Is this what you sell?"

"Yes I was the first to bring it here, no one had done so before"

"Is this how you have grown rich?"

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"Yes Iron is more precious than gold "

"Where does it come from ?"

"From the land of the Halibs, up in the north But they are merely founders and merchants the stuff is brought to them by people who live still farther north There the sky and the earth are of iron, and men, too If they come to you they will exterminate you all Bronze is no match for iron Those who have iron will conquer all the others "

"And are they likely to come ?"

"Yes, they are They are coming already There has been stone, now there is bronze, and there will be iron And then war will be a very different thing from what it is now Where there is iron there is blood, blood clings to iron In the ancient books it says, 'All will be killing each other' There has been a flood of water—there is going to be one of blood, and that will be the end of all things "

"This will not be!"

"Yes, it will Why not ?"

"The Mother will not allow it," she said, and added, after a pause "How is it you are not afraid ?"

"Afraid of what ?"

"Of selling this ?"

She did not want to utter the odious word "iron "

"But what does she care ?" He laughed

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"Gods do not trouble themselves with such matters So long as there are goods there will be people to sell them If I don't somebody else will "

"Hide it! Hide it! Do not show it to her!" she whispered with horror and disgust

He put the knife into the sheath

"And next to the Halibs live the Amazons," he went on, recalling far-away lands, as old sailors do "Amazons mean Breastless Ones They burn away their right breast so that it shall not interfere with drawing the bow And their custom is for women to fight while men spin the wool and nurse the children Why, you in the Islands had once the same custom, too, and, even now, the mother is more than the father, and the priestesses are holier than the priests You Bees too are man-haters, aren't you? What does it say in that song of yours? The one that the Bees hum on moonlight nights, in the sacred gardens, with the sweet scent of saffron about them?"

"It is not a song, it is a prayer"

"Never mind, tell me How does it go?"

She smiled, and suddenly began, in a humming undertone as though praying

' Oh may I escape—I, a virgin pure,
A free daughter of the Heavenly Mother
The slavish yoke of a husband's embraces

"And how does it go on?" he asked eagerly

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She looked down and whispered still lower,
smiling no longer

' May the Mother in Her mercy
Graciously look down upon me
And with Her holy power
May the Virgin shield a virgin

" And the end I know myself

I would rather choose the halter
Than the hateful marriage bed

" So this is what you are like, you holy virgins!
It is not the breast you burn out, it is the heart
But you won't succeed, you foolish creatures
Twice two is four—and it is so in love as in
death Every bird builds a nest, every girl
wants a husband You too will want one—
when you fall in love "

She raised her eyes to him, prophetic stars—
terribly near, terribly distant

" I shall not fall in love," she answered
simply " Not in *that* way "

" But what other way is there? "

She did not answer

The fire was dying out She threw on it some
splinters of pine-wood and cut more of them
ready, enough to last through the night The
fire blazed up The bronze axe glittered, the
black shadows cast by the horns danced on the
walls, and the small idol in the recesses of the
cavern seemed to flutter its chicken-wings as
though ready to fly

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"And is it true that during the Mother's mysteries your priests dress up as priestesses, and the priestesses—as priests?" he spoke again "Why is this? Is the Mother?"

"Be silent!" she said, as menacingly and peremptorily as when he had questioned her about human sacrifice

But he would not be silent now, trembling all over he spoke as though in delirium

"The earth shakes under your feet, it does not want to bear you any longer Wait a bit, God will punish you presently you will all sink into the abyss!"

"What for?"

"Why, for this very thing! For perverting nature, for wanting twice two to make five"

She suddenly laughed in his face, as gaily as she had done when she looked at the rosy almond-blossom in the gathering dusk

"You know nothing, nothing at all! And why do you talk when you don't know?"

He looked straight at her without speaking, and suddenly turned pale again and clenched his teeth, feeling that something both ridiculous and terrible went right through him like the piercing sting of a scorpion And the mad question was on the tip of his tongue "What are you, what are you, Lilith?"

He got up and threw the lion-skin over him

"Where are you going?"

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“To the forest”

“What for?”

“To sleep”

“Don’t you like being here?”

“I don’t”

“Why?”

He looked at her again without speaking—and suddenly she understood. She blushed and looked down. The boy vanished—the girl was left

He walked to the door. She followed him

“Wait, you can’t find your way in the dark there, by the precipice”

He stopped without looking round, he felt that, if he did, he would not go away

“Or, how would it be for you to stay here, and for me to sleep there, in the enclosure? I don’t mind I am used to it. Would you like that?”

Now it was neither a boy nor a girl—only a child. He turned round and slowly walked back. He sat down in his old place

“You are very much like your father, Dio,” he began, thoughtfully, with apparent calm. “He and I were friends—brothers. We went on a voyage once to get amber in the Land of Midnight, next to the Kingdom of Shadows, where there is a glow in the sky all night long, and the trunks of the trees are white. We were sailing and the night sea was light and still, like air, and it seemed it was not there at all.”

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—there was nothing but two skies, one above and one below ‘You see how still it is,’ I said, ‘there is sure to be a storm. Are you not afraid, my brother, to be in a storm with one like me? You know gods wreck ships that carry evildoers.’ And I told him all about myself, and he said ”

“What did you tell him?”

“Wait, I will tell you presently. And he said ‘No I am not afraid, Tamu’ ”

“Was that how he called you?”

“Yes ‘No I am not afraid, Tamu. We are brothers I will never forsake you, together we have lived, together we shall die.’ There was a big storm then, but we weathered it. And yet the gods did have their own way. As we were returning to the Island our ship was dashed on to the submerged rocks by the very shore near the cape of Lithuania, where the sea boils like a cauldron. I was saved, but your father perished. Yes, the gods had their way they destroyed the innocent and saved the guilty.”

“What did you tell him about yourself?”

“Why do you ask?”

“I want to know what you are”

“And if I tell you, will you let me go?”

“I will do as you wish”

He looked down and spoke again with apparent calm, thoughtfully

“I told him whose blood was on me”

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“Whose?”

“My father’s”

He paused and asked her calmly

“Don’t you believe me?”

She gazed into his face, and also looked down
—she believed him

“How did it happen?”

“How did it happen? Very simply We had
a slave, a girl about thirteen, an Elamite And
she was not very beautiful either, just pretty,
but cunning like an animal She deceived both
him and me and slept with us both My father
found it out and killed her, and I killed him
I must have done ”

“Don’t you know for certain?”

“I don’t I was terrified and ran away from
my home, and from the town And I am still
on the run, I cannot rest anywhere I would
rather know for certain than have it neither
one thing nor the other ”

He paused, and then added, with his heavy,
stonelike smile “Perhaps this is why I deal
in iron like merchant, like merchandise”

They sat in silence for some time, not looking
at each other At last he got up and said, still
without raising his eyes

“Well, girl, aren’t you afraid to be with one
like me?”

She also got up, put her hands on his shoulders,
and said

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"No, Tamu, I am not afraid I will never forsake you!"

He raised his eyes to her and something stirred in his face, as though opening itself slowly, like a rusty iron door that had been closed for a long time

"It is he! It is he! Ardoel!" he cried with joyous terror, and, falling at her feet with a stifled sob, kissed—not her feet, but the ground where she stood

Then he got up, walked quickly to one of the heaps of dried leaves, lay down and said, turning with his face to the wall, "Good night, Dio, sleep well Play to the Mother for me!" He covered himself, head and all, with the lion-skin, closed his eyes, and almost at once heard the humming of bees in a moonlit garden, over the saffron-flowers He had just had time to think, "How strange, bees in the moonlight!" and dropped into a sweet sleep, such as he had not slept since his mother held him in her arms as a child

IV

A TERRIBLE dream made him wake up He tried to remember what it was, but could not, and this made it all the more terrible His heart was beating painfully, his temples were throbbing, he was choking

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He sat up, looked round, and, in the dim glow of the embers on the altar, saw something long, slim and golden like saffron by the wall opposite He suddenly understood why he was so terrified

He jumped up and, staggering like one drunk, walked towards the door He fancied that he was still asleep, but had passed from one dream to another, as it sometimes happens in delirium —and, as in delirium, his legs had grown heavy under him, and moving, did not move

He stopped, feeling as before that if he looked back he would not be able to go away He tore the collar of his shirt, and grasped the talisman with both hands, whispering "Ab-vad! Ab-vad!" But the talisman did not help All of a sudden a terrible force seemed to seize him by the head and to turn him round he looked back "I don't want it! I don't want it!" he groaned, grinding his teeth, but the same force pushed him in the back and dragged him towards the long, slim and saffron-coloured thing by the wall

He came up, fell on his knees and, trembling so that his teeth chattered, stretched out his hand and touched first the wolf-skin and then the yellow veil embroidered with silver bees He listened Dio was fast asleep, breathing evenly, the light texture was moving slightly over her breast Her face was covered

He crawled nearer on his knees and stretched

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out his hand once more "Whosoever lifteth the veil from my face shall die," flashed through his mind like lightning He lifted it—he died

He bent over her face, felt her breath—"the sweet breath of saffron in winter"—touched her lips with his and murmured in a frenzied whisper
"What are you, what are you, Lilith?"

She opened her eyes Not understanding yet what it was, she jumped up and pushed him away so that he fell on his back But he got up and went towards her again

She jumped back into the depths of the cavern Her bronze knife glittered in her hand He pulled out his iron one from the sheath, but immediately he threw it away so far that the blade clattered against the wall

He saw by her face that she would kill him if he came near And he slowly came nearer and nearer, step by step, his hands tightly clasped behind his back

When he drew so near that he could seize her, she raised her knife

"Kill me! Kill me! Kill me!" he whispered entreatingly, clasping his hands still tighter behind his back

Suddenly she saw a red stream of blood trickling through the white linen of the bandage on to his bare chest She must have touched his wound as she pushed him away just now

She dropped the knife, raised her arms with

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the palms upwards, as she did when praying by the altar, and cried

“Mother, have mercy!”

He took another step, stopped, raised his eyes as though seeing something above him, and, with a faint cry, fell senseless to the ground

When he recovered, she was kneeling by his side, supporting his head with one hand and with the other holding a cup of water to his lips He drank greedily It was only now that he seemed to have woken up from his terrible dream

“What—what was it?” he asked, glancing into her face

“Nothing,” she answered “You had a bad dream and I woke you up”

He was lying on the ground, with his head on the rolled-up wolf-skin He tried to raise himself and could not She helped him He looked round, and through the half-open door saw, in the bluish light of the morning streaming from the mouth of the cave, the crumpled golden veil, embroidered with silver bees Suddenly he remembered it all He buried his face in his hands

She bent over him, put her arms round his neck and kissed him on the forehead

“Tamu, my brother, I shall never forsake you And the Mother will not forsake us both”

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She stroked his hair, caressing him as a mother caresses a sick child

Suddenly a hubbub of voices and the sounds of a hunting-song reached them from the far distance, gradually drawing nearer and nearer

"Our people from the Mountain," she said, getting up hastily "Wait a minute"

She ran out from the cave into the enclosure, seized a huge triton's shell that lay on a stone by the gate, put the pointed end that had a hole bored in it to her lips, blew into it, and a sound like the roar of a bull issued from it, rousing many-voiced echoes in the hills and the woods Such trumpet-shells were used by shepherds and hunters to call each other when in danger

As the last echo died down she listened, and soon a similar trumpet-sound came from the direction where the hunters' song had been heard

Before going back into the cave she looked at the Mountain The morning was clear The sun had not yet risen, but in the transparent gold of the sky, near to the morning star scintillating like a huge diamond, snow-clad Ida glittered rosy-white, virginally pure, like the immaculate Virgin-Mother Herself

V

HUNTERS and huntresses were coming down the foothills of the Mountain into the great plain of Knossos

In one of the carts, with creaking wooden wheels without spokes, drawn by oxen, lay the captured bull, in another lay Tamu on a soft heap of furs, taken off by the hunters It was warm down here Spears, bows, poles, nets and other hunting-tackle were put at the bottom of the cart

The bull, tightly bound, entangled in a net of thick ropes, looked like a monstrously big white and tender chrysalis He had long ceased struggling, exhausted, and only shuddered painfully from time to time, rolling his bloodshot eye and bellowing with a dull, abrupt sound, so powerful that it resounded right through the people around

Tamu held on with his hand to the side of the cart Dio walked beside him, with her hand over his They could not speak they would not have heard each other for the creaking of the wheels But when she looked at him with a silent smile his heart stood still with happiness as in the wood the evening before, though he knew that happiness was not to be He listened to the bellowing of the bull, and it seemed to him

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that he too was entangled in a thick net—a bull caught by a beautiful virgin-huntress

Youths and maidens sang, danced, played about like children, but everything was decorous, ceremonial, like a sacred rite They glorified the god Adun, the immortal Bull, the Son of the Great Mother To the clanging of cymbals and the squealing of flutes they sang and danced, whistling and shouting

Io Adun! Io Adun!
Ferocious Bull! Ferocious Bull!
To the squeals of flutes to the murmur of strings
Jump jump jump!
Hasten hasten away
From the honey laden meadows
From the icy clear springs!
Dance to make our vines grow
Dance to make our harvest rich,
Dance to make our flocks abound
Dance to give us honey!"

Suddenly, from the top of the hill, at the turn of the road, they caught sight of the misty wind-swept sea, wreathed as it were in the white smoke of the foaming waves and glowing with a dark, purple glow And intoxicated with the salty freshness of the sea they danced and sang still more joyously

Io Adun! Io Adun!
Dance in the gentle waves
For ever azure blue!
Glory be to the Father unspeakable
Glory be to the Son immolated
Glory be to thee Great Mother!"

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And below, at the foot of the hill, in the dark-green ring of cypress-groves, dazzling as fresh-fallen snow or linen spread out to bleach in the fields, gleamed the city-palace of white stone, the dwelling of the God-Bull—the Labyrinth

THE LABYRINTH

THE LABYRINTH

I



UTANKHAMON, or Tuta, as everyone called him, the son-in-law of Akhnaton, king of Egypt, had been sent as an envoy to the great Kingdom of the Seas, the island of Keftiu—Crete

He went on board ship with some trepidation Egyptians were afraid of the “Very-Green”—*Uazit-Oireta*, the sea

“I was sailing along the Very-Green. Suddenly a tempest blew up and wrecked the ship. My men perished, but I clung to a plank and was thrown up by the waves on the island of Keftiu,” he wrote, describing his voyage. Nothing of the kind had happened—Tuta arrived quite safely at the island of Crete, but, clever at story-telling and following the pattern of classical literature, he invented the shipwreck, for all the ancient Egyptian tales about sea-voyages began in this fashion.

While waiting to be received by the king of Crete, in the rooms of the Knossos palace, he spent every morning writing of his travel. He might have dictated it to his secretary, but he did not want to—he liked writing. His grand-

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fathers and great-grandfathers were scribes, he was born, so to say, with the scribe's reed in his hand Every time that he sat down to his work he recalled a saying of ancestral wisdom "The office of a scribe is higher than any other Men sweat at their work, but a scribe keeps cool The god Tot himself, the beautiful-faced Monkey, was the first scribe "

Crouching before a low stand with a slanting board, and dipping the bamboo-reed in ink, he was tracing carefully the signs of the hieroglyphic shorthand upon the silky and smooth papyrus

A huge black hunting-cat, half a panther, was sleeping on the rug at his feet There was a slight resemblance between them both had round, flat, broad faces, large empty eyes like those of a beast of prey, soft cautious movements, a gentle and indifferent manner They were inseparable the cat followed him about like a shadow, and he fancied at times that it was not an animal but a familiar guardian spirit

After the Egyptian sun he could not get accustomed to the cold here To keep warm he sat near a brazier filled with glowing embers, but the morning freshness made him pull his thick cloak round him He could hardly hold the bamboo-reed in his cold fingers

"A great marvel happens in the island of Keftiu the rain-water turns hard and white like salt with the cold The people here call it

snow, but we have not even the word for it, since our eyes have never beheld such a marvel," he wrote, describing the snow on Mount Ida, and this made him still colder

"Put some more charcoal on," he said to the servant, and stopped writing, hiding his cold hands under his cloak

Every day the royal attendants brought gifts from the king of Crete to the king of Egypt. On that day they brought twelve earthenware vessels wonderfully painted, graceful like the bodies of beautiful young girls and fine like egg-shell

Yuti, a painter, and the superintendent of the king's architects, painters and sculptors, sent by the king of Egypt with Tuta to engage Cretan craftsmen, knocked with the joint of his middle finger against the wall of one of the vessels. It made a ringing sound as though it were of glass.

"Our men could not have made it so fine!" Tuta exclaimed, admiringly

"Some like it fine, others like it strong. The craftsmen here work for this age, and ours for eternity," Yuti replied

He said one thing but he thought another. When his strong, small, intelligent hand—there is intelligence in an artist's hand—touched the curves of the clay, tender like those of a living body, his wrinkled face, tanned by the sun as

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that of an old mason's, worked with a strange feeling, both sweet and painful "There is nothing in the world but Egypt," he had thought all his life, and his fathers had thought so before him—and now he understood that there was something else

On one of the vessels the stems of reeds were painted so vividly that one seemed to see them moving in the wind, to hear them rustling

"And what is this?" asked Tuta, pointing to a dark curved line above the reeds

"Clouds," the painter explained

Tuta marvelled during the thousands of years of Egyptian painting it had never occurred to anyone to arrest the cloud in its flight

And Yuti's face looked more pained than ever He did not understand with his brain, but he felt with his heart, that perhaps this curved line, this flying cloud was alone sufficient to destroy all the eternal granites of Egypt To destroy the eternal, to perpetuate the momentary, to arrest the flying—this was what those lawless men were aiming at

"Unclean, unclean, uncircumcised!" he whispered with superstitious terror

On other vases there were pictures of the mysterious life at the bottom of the sea blue-green dolphins among porous stones, a net for catching purple shells, a big-bellied octopus moving its yellow, slimy tentacles, covered with

rosy bubbles, flocks of flying-fish fluttering over the water like birds And this, too, was so life-like that one seemed to hear the splash of the waves, to smell the salty oyster freshness

"*Nefert, nefert!* Charming, charming!" Tuta repeated, delighted "And what are you frowning at? Don't you like it?"

"You know yourself, my lord," the painter answered calmly—though not so calmly as he would like to have done—"we men of the Black Earth do not like the Very-Green 'If you sail the sea, tears there will be!' On the earth live the gods and in the sea the devils"

And after thinking a little, he added "Saving your presence, maybe the whole of their art is unclean, diabolical"

"You are an intelligent man, Yuti, but what nonsense you talk!"

"It is not nonsense "

"Of course it is I know you artists through and through You are all jealous of each other You cannot make things that they can and so you are jealous Wait a bit, I will write to the king to leave you here, with the sea-devils, as an apprentice!" laughed Tuta, he liked teasing the old man

Yuti's eyes flashed, but only for an instant Tutankhamon was his superior, and, like a good Egyptian, he respected his superiors

"If it pleases his Majesty, I shall go as an

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apprentice to the devils themselves," he answered humbly, and in accordance with the court etiquette snuffed the dignitary's hand instead of kissing it

He went to a wooden box that had been brought along with the vessels, pulled out a little plank at the side and took out two small figures, that of a jumping bull made of dark smooth bronze, and of a man made of ivory suspended by an almost invisible thread above the bull's back, between two tiny pillars joined by a cross-beam

Yuti pushed the mannikin and it swayed to and fro in a curve above the jumping bull, as though leaping over it like the sacred dancers and acrobats in the Knossos arena during the Bull games

As Yuti looked at the tense, eager body flying like an arrow, he suddenly recalled the curious sensation one has in dreams—of flying and wondering "How is it I did not know before that I could fly?"

"Let us fly, they say, let us make wings and fly—and be like gods," he thought aloud

"Who says that?" asked Tuta

"The Daedals"

"What Daedals?"

"Why, these crafty creatures here The great Daedalus made wings of wax for his son Icarus, and the urchin flew up into the sky, but, out

of mischief, he drew too near the sun, the wax melted, the naughty boy fell and was killed
‘But we shall manage better,’ they say, ‘and fly properly’”

“And what do you think? They will! They can, they can do anything,” Tuta exclaimed again, admiringly

“They certainly will fly, but where to?”

“Where? Into the sky, of course”

“That’s just it, will it be the sky? Did my lord sleep well last night?”

“Yes, why?”

“Did you hear anything?”

“No Wait a minute, I did hear something Was it thunder?”

“Thunder, but not in the sky”

“Where, then?”

“Under the earth They say it often happens here before the earth begins to shake Do you know the iron merchant?”

“Tammuzadad? Oh yes I want to buy some iron from him, but he asks too much Well, what about him?”

“Why, this he says it is not for nothing that the earth shakes under them—it does not want to bear them any longer, God will punish them one day and they will all sink into the nethermost abyss”

“What for?”

“For this very thing For saying, ‘We will

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conquer nature, we will be like gods,'" said Yuti, and pushed the figure once more it swayed to and fro, flying with a marvellous, dreamlike lightness

"They will fly, only not into the sky, but into the abyss this will be the end of it all"

The cat woke up, stretched, looked at them, narrowing the agates of its amber eyes, and purred as though it wanted to say something, it suddenly resembled the Sphinx

But Tuta got up and went into the toilet-chamber The cat followed him

Of all Cretan marvels, the water-closet seemed to him the most marvellous The cunning Daedals had laid through the palace a network of water-pipes and drains The water rising to the top carried off all the impurities down the subterraneous sewers, washing everything clean The King-God Ra himself, when he lived on the earth, could hardly have dreamed of such luxury

The walls of the room were covered with smooth white plaster tiles, it was clean, light and fresh, and down below the water gurgled like an everlasting spring And on the windowsill real lilies were blooming in pots—another marvel everywhere else men cut flowers in order to put them into vases with water, but here they grew indoors as in the open air

"Ah, dear good sea-devils!" thought Tuta,

"they can do anything they choose They will certainly fly It is nice to fly, but it is not bad to sit in a delightful place like this, either!"

II

ANI, Tuta's secretary, was waiting to tell him two pieces of news the king of Crete was going to receive him that day at noon, and a messenger had come from Egypt with important letters

Tuta went up the steps to the flat roof over the part of the palace where he lived, lit up with the morning sun The cat followed him The whole vast city-palace—the house of the Holy Axc, Labra, the Labyrinth—could be seen from here, made of chalk, lime, alabaster, dazzlingly white in the sun, like freshly-fallen snow or linen laid out to bleach in the fields, with the narrow strip of the dark-blue sea on the horizon

Tuta lay on a couch, warming himself in the sun, drinking real Egyptian beer—he took it everywhere with him in sealed vessels—and eating cakes made of lotus-flower seeds, also an Egyptian dainty He drank out of his own mug, ate out of his own dish, so as not to defile himself with the Cretan uncleanness "The sea-devils are very charming, but they are devils all the same"

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He sent for the messenger

The messenger, Amanapa, or Ama, a Sidonian by birth, was in the Egyptian service as a scribe of the governor of Urushalim—Jerusalem—the chief town of Canaan Ama's rank was low, but being honest and intelligent he was often trusted with matters of importance In the king's foreign office it was said that he would go far

He was of prepossessing appearance, his face wore an expression of serene gravity, there was gentle persuasiveness in his voice, and a subtle smile on his thin lips, the top lip was shaved, but he had a wedge-shaped beard turned up at the end according to the Canaanite custom

As he came on to the roof he prostrated himself, crawled towards Tuta on his knees, and, as Yuti had done, sniffed his hand instead of kissing it He gave Tuta two round, narrow boxes of sycamore-wood, sealed with the king's seal On both the envoy's name was written in a new way Tutankhaton, instead of Tutankhamon, for the ancient god Amon had been dethroned by the new god Aton

Tuta unsealed one of the boxes containing letters from the governors of Canaan The originals, written on clay tablets in Babylonian wedge-shaped characters, had been translated into Egyptian in the king's foreign office and sent to his envoy for information, as he had to see the king of Crete about Canaan affairs, too

Tuta read the letter of Ribaddi, Egyptian governor of the seaside town Byblos

To the king who is my lord my sun the health of my life thus speaks Ribaddi I fall at thy feet seven times seven on my back and seven on my front Let my King know this Azru an Amorite a traitor a dog and the son of a dog has gone over to the king of the Hittites And they have gathered together chariots and men to take thy lands For the last twenty years I have been sending to thee for help but thou hast not helped me If thou dost not help me even now I shall leave the town and flee for safety, for the king of the Hittites is a mighty king first he will take our land and then thine Let then the king of Egypt remember his servant and send his men so that we may withstand Azru the traitor My king my god, my sun give life to thy lands spare us, have pity!

"Ah, he does write well, poor man! One cannot read it without tears" Tuta was much moved "Well, and will an army be sent to him?"

Ama heaved a sigh "No, my lord, an exhortation to Azru has been sent instead of an army"

Tuta smiled "Much he cares about the exhortation, the rascal! I am sorry for Ribaddi he is a faithful servant The Amorite fox will strip him like a vine"

Ama knelt down "He tearfully begs your highness to write to the king and intercede for him"

"Certainly I will write But what is the good? You know yourself there is only one answer 'We are not going to fight anyone, peace is better than war'"

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Tuta read the letter from Abdihibba, the governor of Jerusalem

Khabiri the robbers are taking all the king's towns plundering them and burning them with fire If the king's army does not come all the towns will be lost The brigand Joshua will descend upon them from the hills of Lebanon like a lion upon a flock of sheep he will take Urushalm, the city of God and the unclean Khabiri will defile it

Khabiri—the Jews—a small tribe of Canaanite nomads, had come to Egypt as supplicants, at first they lived quietly, but then, having multiplied like locusts, they robbed their masters and went into the desert of Sinai, under the leadership of their prophet Mosu—Moses, for forty years they wandered in the desert, and now they suddenly appeared before the walls of Jerusalem Moses died and a new prophet, Joshua, had led the Khabiri into Canaan, the Promised Land

“What are these Khabiri? Surely not ours?”
Tuta asked

“They are indeed,” answered Ama
“Ah, the wretches! They have grown bold!
And we are a fine set too! What were we thinking about? We did not exterminate the vermin when we might have done, and now we shall have no end of trouble with them!”

Tuta glanced at the letters from other governors All the cities of Canaan—Tyre, Sidon, Hezir, Arvad, Ascalon, Tunippa, Beyrouth,

Kadesh—were imploring the king of Egypt, "Save us, have pity! The Khabiri are coming from the south, the Hittites from the north, if you do not help us Canaan is lost Canaan is a wall of Egypt, the thieves will undermine the wall and enter the house"

Tuta opened the second box, containing a letter from his friend and protector Ayi, an old dignitary

Rejoice O my son that you are living in the island of Keftiu in the midst of the Very Green and not on the Black Earth (Egypt) Everything here is in a state of turmoil like boiling water in a covered cauldron broth is being cooked very much to the taste of the Hittites and the Khabiri we do not want to fight anyone peace is better than war we shall turn our swords into ploughshares and with these ploughshares smash each other's heads in a fratricidal war about the gods The gods are having a fight but men's bones are being broken Do not return until I write Here is a letter from a friend Ama is a trusty servant But all the same burn it after you have read it

A sheet of papyrus with two lines on it was attached to the letter

Everything is ready When your hour is come return and be king save Egypt

There was no signature, but Tuta recognised the hand of Ptamoz, the great High Priest of Amon

He looked at the streak of the blue sea beyond the white palace and his heart beat, his head grew dizzy, as though he suddenly found himself flying

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like that little ivory figure on a thread, or the son
of Daedalus on his wings of wax

He wondered if Ama noticed his agitation
But the cat would have been more likely to
notice it, so modestly did Ama cast down his
eyes and so discreet was his silence "Yes, this
man will go far," Tuta decided, and taking a
ring off his finger put it on Ama's Still without
a word Ama bowed down to the ground and
sniffed Tuta's feet

Tuta understood that he was worshipping
the rising sun, the future king of Egypt,
Tutankhamon

III

WITHOUT leaving the balcony Tuta began to
dress for the king's reception

In front of a round mirror of red bronze,
slightly elongated, like the disc of the rising
sun, a special painter was touching up his eyes
with green antimony, lengthening the slit by
an enormously long line from the corner of the
eyelids almost to the ear and tracing under the
lower lid the magical spiral—the Eye of Horus
—as a defence against the evil eye

The hairdresser was trying on Tuta's shaven
head different kinds of wigs—vaulted, lobed,
tiled Tuta selected the latter, it consisted of

triangles of hair that lay in a regular pattern one over the other like tiles on a roof

The barber offered him two kinds of beards to be tied on with a tape Amon's cube of thick black horsehair and the plait of Osiris made of the fair hair of the Libyan women Tuta chose the plait

The master of the wardrobe brought the freshly washed and ironed white clothes, as he did every morning, made of the finest "king's flax" or "woven air", they were pleated throughout, the short and wide sleeves not reaching to the elbow were in feather-shaped pleats and looked like wings, the stiffly-starched pleated apron stuck out, a transparent little pyramid that seemed made of glass, at the point where the pleats met, the golden face of a jackal sparkled, small and pointed, with ruby eyes

When Tuta put on all these white nebulous garments he looked like a cloud ready to fly away at any moment

The old barber, Zaza, inordinately fond of talking, asked him, as he was curling and perfuming the plaited beard

"Did you hear the roaring of the Bull last night, my lord?"

"It wasn't a bull, it was thunder"

"Yes, it was the Bull They say there is a Bull chained up underground here in the palace, and when he begins to roar and to struggle the

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earth shakes It is their god—that's why bulls' horns are stuck everywhere And even the king here is half a bull he has the body of a man and the head of a bull "

"What rubbish you talk, you stupid! Just think, how could this be?"

"Why, very simply, if the baby was born of a bull and a woman "

And he began telling a story A bull, white as the sea-foam and beautiful as a god, came out of the blue sea, the queen of Crete fell in love with him, had a dummy heifer made, empty inside, and climbed into it The animal was deceived it covered the dead heifer as though it were living and the queen conceived a monster—half man, half bull

Tuta listened at first, but then lost patience and told the man to stop

"You don't believe me, but you will see for yourself," Zaza muttered mysteriously

When he had finished dressing Tuta went out into the courtyard and got into the litter—a cradle made of reeds, with a semicircular shield of basket-work at the back as a protection from the wind Sturdy Nubians lifted the litter on to their shoulders, two fan-bearers walked at the side and a servant of the palace in front as a guide—without him they would have lost their way

But Tuta fancied that the guide made them

go round and round on purpose, in order to conceal from foreigners the real plan of the palace so endless were the corridors and passages, the streets and alleys, the vestibules, the porticoes, the halls, the cells, walls above walls, pillars above pillars, roofs above roofs, and stairs everywhere going up or down All this made of plaster, chalk, lime and alabaster, dazzlingly white in the sun, opalescent in the shade, seemed to turn round and round like a whirlwind, twisting itself into the endless twists of an inextricable Labyrinth

The litter rocked to and fro like a cradle, lulling him to sleep, and Tuta fancied that he was dreaming and that this dizzily whirling dream of oppressive whiteness would never come to an end

They passed a tiny chapel like a toy, with a whole forest of bulls' horns "Their god is a Bull," Tuta recalled

In some places masons were mending the walls and the ceilings

"What is this?" he asked, and each time the answer was

"The earth trembled"

"The Bull struggles on his chain and the earth trembles," he recalled again

He wanted to think of his meeting with the king and could not "What is he like?" he thought, but instead of a human face a bull's

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head floated out of the labyrinth of his dreams

He had been waiting to see the king for more than a month the king kept putting him off on the pretext of illness "No, it is not illness—he is ashamed, I expect, to show to people his bull's face," Tuta thought suddenly, as though talking in his sleep

They came at last to a large sunlit square, in which a number of bronze axes—Labrae, symbols of the immolated God-Bull—were glowing like fire, white doves, consecrated to the Mother, fluttered around them like flakes of snow Tiled paths, dark blue like the waves of the sea, wound along the white stone square, so that "the sea-devils" could walk upon land as though it were the sea

The litter stopped The king's bodyguard—youths that looked like maidens, or perhaps maidens that resembled youths—were waiting for the envoy by a low bronze door that was locked, they helped him to get out of the litter, opened the door, and led him into the king's apartments

IV

THROUGH a half-dark vestibule, with rows of cypress pillars tapering in a curious fashion towards the base and ornamented with a painted design, they came into a small chamber—the throne-room. A dim mysterious light, as though coming through water, penetrated from an inner court—a well of light—through the narrow chinks of windows high up by the ceiling. The bluish smoke of sweet-scented saffron floated up from the brazier, deepening the mystery of the twilight, and the opalescent whiteness of the alabaster walls seemed more fantastic and dreamlike than ever.

On the inner wall there were two frescoes, exactly alike on a meadow of lilies two enormous griffins, with birds' beaks, lions' paws, serpents' tails and peacocks' combs, seemed to keep watch over the king's throne, painted luxuriously and delicately like a fairy flower. Its high back, bent in a wavelike curve, was the shape of an oak-leaf.

Tuta looked at the throne and was dumbfounded, he could not believe his eyes, he opened them wide, gazing intently, but still went on seeing the same thing as before on the throne sat a monster—a man with the head of a bull.

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He thought at first that it was not living
But suddenly it moved, raised its hand and
slowly beckoned to him, nodding its head He
thought it would roar like a bull in a moment,
and was on the point of screaming with terror and
upsetting the whole ceremony of the reception
But, glory be to Amon-Aton, it did not roar and
merely continued nodding and beckoning

As though asking what it meant Tuta looked
round at the men, also very strange-looking
creatures, who sat on benches along the walls
old men dressed in saffron-yellow robes, with
brown-yellow, flabby, womanish faces, exactly
like corpses "The king's eunuchs," Tuta guessed
he had seen such men at the Pharaoh's court

"Don't be afraid, walk up to his Majesty,"
the interpreter whispered into his ear

Trying to look not at the bull face of the
monster, but only at its human body, clothed
in a robe of saffron-yellow with a woven pattern
of silver lilies and long like a woman's dress,
Tuta drew near Remembering that he was the
envoy of a great king, and perhaps a future
king himself, he decided to keep up his dignity

He had prepared beforehand and learned by
heart the speech for the occasion One thing
embarrassed him he knew that according to the
etiquette the king was to be called now "King"
and now "Queen," for he was both Man and
Woman, like the god Adun He could not quite

grasp this, but remembering that the queen of Egypt, Hatshepsut, wore a man's clothes and the beard of Osiris and also called herself both king and queen, he hoped to overcome the difficulty

Approaching the throne he spoke in Egyptian, while the interpreter translated his words into Cretan

"The great king of the North and the South, Akhnaton Neferheperura Uaenra — Sun's Joy, Sun's beautiful essence, Sun's only Son—thus speaks to the great king-queen of Keftiu may the Sun-god Aton embrace with his rays my brother—my sister—and preserve him—preserve her—for ever and ever!"

He listened to himself with pleasure, he particularly liked the way he handled the difficulty by introducing strange combinations of the masculine and feminine gender. He was so carried away by his eloquence that he now looked untroubled straight at the king's bull face the king might be a bull for aught he cared, so long as his speech was all it should be

Two girlish-looking youths approached the king and took off his head Tuta started again dumbfounded he only now understood that the bull's head was a mask

Egyptian priests too wore masks of animal gods, but there one could see at once that they were not real faces, while here the cunning

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Daedals made the mask so skilfully that it would have looked living even if the twilight of the chamber had not helped the illusion

But the monster's human face did not afford Tuta much pleasure either it was as flabby and womanish as the faces of the eunuchs by the walls, only it looked still more dead, they seemed to have just risen from their coffins, while this one must have done so long ago

After taking off the bull's head the youths put on the king a wreath of silver lilies with peacock's feathers

"May the Great Mother bless thee, my son, and hear our constant prayer that our heart and the heart of our beloved brother the great king of Egypt may be one as the sun in heaven is one," said the king in Cretan, while the interpreter translated his words into Egyptian

Listening to the king's cracked, womanish voice, gazing at his puffy, womanish face, Tuta wondered whether it was a man or a woman And he was still more perplexed when he remembered that twelve girlish-looking youths were called the king's brides and twelve boyish-looking maidens were called the queen's bridegrooms it seemed as though this confusion were on purpose—to deepen the mystery of the inextricable Labyrinth

V

At a sign from the king all went out, left alone with the envoy he spoke in Egyptian

"Sit down, my son, here, nearer to me," he said, motioning him to a chair "I am very glad to see you *Ankb em Maat*—He who lives in truth—is not this how my brother the king of Egypt calls himself?"

"Yes"

"And if it is so, let us too love the truth The truth is like the sun there is no hiding it behind a mask I have taken off mine, you do the same Let us speak the truth, my son!"

He smiled a cunning smile, and all at once the corpse came to life The small, grey, sharp eyes sparkled with such intelligence that Tuta fancied the king could see through a stone wall —the craftiest of all the crafty Daedals

"Well, how are things going with you in Canaan? Badly? Don't hide anything, don't be afraid I know all about it"

And from the way he began questioning him Tuta understood that he really did know all about it

He spoke in a cool, calm, business-like way, but sometimes there was a strange gleam in his eyes, as though he were drunk—and Tuta remembered what he had heard about him

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The Cietan queen, Velhana, had two sons Idomin, the elder, and Sarpedomin, the younger. When she appointed the younger as heir to the throne, the elder conspired with the leaders of the people who had grown tired of women's rule. "The women have lorded it over us enough, it is time we too were masters!" they cried, exciting the mob. With their help Idomin deposed the queen and first imprisoned and then killed her. He wanted to kill his brother, too, but he ran away to foreign lands. As king, Idomin was, or appeared to be, kind and gracious, but now and again he had fits of madness; sometimes he felt such remorse for having killed his mother that he wanted to commit suicide, and sometimes he flew at people in a fury like the monster Minotaurus, whose mask he wore, as did all the heirs of king Minos, the God-Bull.

"Then why does not the king send his troops to Canaan?" Idomin asked.

Tuta had foreseen the question, but it was not easy to answer it.

"The king of Egypt does not wish to fight anyone, he says peace is better than war," Tuta began, but could not finish—his own words struck him as absurd.

"How, not fight anyone?" asked Idomin in surprise. "And if the enemy enters the king's country, isn't he going to fight even then?"

"Perhaps not even then" Tuta broke off again, confused, he hastened to add

"The king's thoughts are like God's—there is no knowing them But I believe that if the king were attacked he would defend himself"

"But he has been attacked already Canaan is his land What then is he waiting for?"

"It is not for a slave like me to judge my king, he knows best what he is doing," Tuta answered humbly

Idomin looked at him intently without speaking Suddenly he bent down, tapped himself on the forehead with his finger and whispered in Tuta's ear

"Is the king well?"

"His Majesty is as well as the sun in heaven" Tuta pronounced the usual words in the usual tone, but in spite of himself he lowered his eyes

Idomin's sharp eyes pierced him like needles, and when he looked up again the king read the silent answer in his eyes

"Glory be to the Great Mother, may she preserve my brother the king for ever and ever" He too pronounced the usual phrase, but they understood each other without speaking the king of Egypt was a madman

"Yes, peace is better than war," Idomin continued in a low voice, thoughtfully, as though speaking to himself "All men are

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brothers, children of the one heavenly father,
the sun Aton-Adun Not to fight anyone, to
turn the swords into ploughshares—oh, if this
could only be! But it was so, at the beginning
of time As it says in the ancient song

The first men did not know the god of war and of slaughter
They knew the good Mother alone the immaculate Virgin
Holy altars were not defiled with the blood of slain victims
All was gentle on earth the birds and the beasts were
friendly
Trustfully clung they to man and the flame of life burned
within them

Tuta looked at him with interest “He
glorifies the Great Mother and yet he has killed
his own mother,” he thought, but, strange to say,
without any indignation, as though fascinated
by the vision of the Golden Age

“So it was, so it will be this is the desire of
Akhnaton Uaenia, joy of the Sun, Sun’s only
Son! Cursed be Amon, the god of war, blessed
be Aton, the god of Peace Is it not so, my son?”

“You know the king’s teaching?” Tuta
asked in surprise

“Of course I do Adun is Aton—we have the
same god as you have”

“There is no god but Aton, he is worshipped
everywhere,” Tuta repeated without conviction,
like a schoolboy saying a dull lesson

“Has the king many followers?” Idomin
asked

"Yes, at Court and in Akhtaton, the new city of the Sun, he has many"

"And in other towns?"

"In other towns, too"

"A few?"

"Not so many"

"And the people?"

"The people believe in the old gods"

"They don't want the new? They rebel?"

"No, we don't encourage rebels"

"Do you put them to death?"

"We do"

"And does the king know about it?"

"Why should he?"

"But you cannot put them all to death, can you?"

"No, we cannot"

"It is hard for the king not to have his people with him, to be one against all!" Idomin sighed despondently "Which is the stronger, my son, do you think—one or all?"

"All," Tuta answered with conviction and suddenly bethought himself—"Why is he cross-examining me?"

"I am sorry for my beloved brother!" Idomin sighed still more despondently "There is no saving him He will perish and bring others to ruin Men are wicked and stupid they cannot live in peace, they must fight They like war

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better than peace What do you think, my son,
will there always be war?"

"Always" Tuta again could not help
answering sincerely

"And if so, Aton cannot hold his own against
Amon," Idomin went on "Akhnaton is a
great prophet no greater has been born of
woman But the small will devour the great,
all are too much for one 'Men eat my flesh'
—do you know of whom this is said?"

"Of the Secret One, whose name is unutter-
able," Tuta said, again in the voice of a schoolboy
repeating a dull lesson, he remembered that this
was said in the Book of the Dead about Osiris,
the immolated god

"Yes, about Him The great Victim slain
before the foundation of the world is He, the
joy of the Sun, the Sun's only Son, Akhnaton
Uaenra!" cried Idomin, and his eyes flashed
suddenly with such a frenzied, almost insane
fire that Tuta was frightened

'Glory be to the Father unspeakable!
Glory be to the Son immolated!
Glory be to thee Great Mother!

the king said, in Cretan, raising his hands in
prayer And bending down again suddenly he
whispered in Tuta's ear

"Would you like to be king?"

Tuta drew back, startled

"It is not my lot to reign"

"Why not?"

"Because there is another heir, Saakara,
husband of the king's eldest daughter"

"To-day it is he and to-morrow you"

The sharp eyes pierced him like red-hot
needles

"And when you are king, you won't say
'peace is better than war'?" Idomin asked him

"What is the good of talking of things that
are not to be?" Tuta sighed, and suddenly his
eyes flashed and he clenched his fists "If I
were king, I would give this rabble the lesson
they deserve!"

"What rabble?"

"The unclean Khabiri, the brigands, the
Hittites!"

"It isn't they who are dangerous"

"Who, then?"

"The men of the North, the Iron-men Have
you heard about them?"

"Yes, I have—the Danaans, the Dardans,
the Trojans, the Pelasgians, the Achaeans" Tuta
mentioned the names of the half-savage tribes
that to Egypt still seemed fabulously distant

"And have you heard about my brother,
Sarpedomin?"

"Yes, I have He ran away to them, to the
Iron-men"

"Yes, to them He wants to lead them

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against me, to avenge his mother! But the Great Mother sees I am clean of our mother's blood! He killed her, not I! And he is seeking my life now, the villain, the fratricide! He is accursed, accursed, accursed!" Idomén whispered in terror, thrusting forward his hands and looking round at the door as though his brother were behind it.

"Woe to us if the Iron-men come! First to us, and then to you! They will destroy and wipe away everything, and not leave stone upon stone! The Iron-men will come out of the night, and the Iron-night will come—the end of all things!"

"What are we to do, then?" asked Tuta.

"Be together! Together we shall save the world! The earth for you and the sea for me! Will you have it so?"

"I will," Tuta whispered, closing his eyes, and again he fancied he was flying.

The king rose from his throne, went up to Tuta, placed both hands on his head and said solemnly,

"Rejoice, my beloved brother, king of Egypt, Tutankhamon!"

PASIPHAE

PASIPHAE

I



HE games of the Bulls were being held in the Knossos amphitheatre

The seats for spectators, cut in the rock of a sloping hill and paved with squares of limestone, rose up in semicircles above the oval arena strewn with sand. In the middle of the amphitheatre stood the king's purple tent on gilded posts with double-edged axes—labrae. A huge bull's head made of silver glittered above the tent. The lower semicircle of seats rested on pillars of cypress-wood, and between them were the narrow gangways into the stables of the bulls.

A narrow blue strip of the sea could be seen on one side, while on the other the misty outline of Mount Kaeratos looked like a giant's face turned towards the sky—the face of the dead god Adun in whose honour the games of the Bulls were held.

They began with the dance of Adun's priests, the Kuieti, who had nursed the Babe. The Mother had given it to them that they might hide the Son from the wrath of the Father, for the Father is the devouring flame and the Son

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is the sacrificial victim. They had hidden the Babe in a cave on Mount Dicte, where the goat Amalthea suckled it and wild bees brought it the honey of the hillside flowers, while the Kureti danced round it, drowning the infant's cry with the stamping of feet and the clatter of armour and swords, so that the Father could not find the Son and destroy Him, and the eternal Victim should not be devoured by the eternal Fire.

In their grief for the immolated God the frenzied dancers cut themselves with swords so that the blood dropped like a red dew on to the white sand.

Suddenly one of them fell down in convulsions, foaming at the mouth, the others surrounded him in a close ring and the terrible sacrament was performed he castrated himself with a knife of flint, crying

“Glory be to Adun, the Maiden-Youth!”

And the whole multitude of spectators rose to their feet like one man, exclaiming

“Io Adun, Io Adun! Rejoice, O Youth! Rejoice, O Maiden!”

The frenzied dance of the Kureti was followed by a slow dance of the priestesses of the Moon Veiled in transparent bluish tissue, like a moonlit cloud, slowly, like moonbeams through the clouds of the night, they glided through the coils of the dance that circled with the twists

and turns of a labyrinth, they went through the cycle of Pasiphae, the Light-giving, the full Moon, they danced the slow, ecstatic, circling dance of all that is in the world, from the tendrils of the curling vine to the whirlpool of the ocean depths, from the twining of the maidens' curls to the revolutions of the stars at night for all things in the world dance, go round in an everlasting circle

And once more the whole multitude of spectators held their breath like one man, feeling that God is in stillness

When at sunset two crimson gleams—two bull's horns over the king's tent ceased glittering and two horns of the new moon shone like silver above Mount Kaeratos rosy with the evening glow, the games of the Bulls began

The bronze gratings of the stables were lifted by means of chains, releasing wild bulls, white, black, tawny, spotted, heavy and massive, big-horned, monstrously beautiful, the first-fruits of creation, the godlike sons of Mother Earth

Tired of standing in the stables, they were glad to be free, and ran, jumped and galloped about as though dancing to the glory of god Adun, the heavenly Bull There was a smell of the stables and warm manure, dust rose in clouds like smoke after a fire, the earth groaned with the thud of their feet and the air shook

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with the bellowing that was like the roar of thunder

Men and women appeared, strangely small among the huge bulls—like little boys and girls, dancers and acrobats, they were naked except for cross-gartered leather boots on their feet and a padded belt of leather and bronze round the wasplike waist, with a short leather apron attached to it. Their bodies were dark-skinned, sinewy, slender, the breasts hardly showing—it was hard to tell the boys from the girls.

They began an incredible dance with the bulls. When an infuriated animal, with its horns set, rushed at a man from a distance, the man waited for him without moving, and only at the last moment—when the horns were about to pierce his body—he jumped slightly to one side, seized the horns, and taking advantage of the movement of the bull's head to toss him, he tossed himself up and jumped on to the bull's back with indescribable agility.

The last grating was lifted and a bull bounded out, the most fierce and savage of all, one who had just been caught in the wilds of Mount Ida, at that last hunting-party in which Dio, daughter of Aridoel, and Tammuzadad, the Babylonian, took part—white like the sea-foam, beautiful like a god coming out of the blue sea with the white foam of the roaring waves—the God-Bull, Pasiphae's lover.

This was the first time that he was let out into the arena, and, to tame him, for the three days previously they had given him no drink, otherwise no one would have been able to cope with him

A high oaken trough with water was fixed in the arena, in front of the king's tent. As the bull ran past it he sniffed the water, stood still, rose on his hind-legs, placed his front hoofs on the edge of the trough, thrust his face into it and began drinking greedily

A thick rope was stretched on two masts over the drinking-trough. Quickly, like a squirrel, a girl of fifteen climbed one of the masts, ran along the rope, stopped opposite the bull, and, suddenly stretching her arms forward, threw herself head downwards, like a diver jumping into water. The half-childish, half-girlish naked body, sharp as an arrow, darted through the air—and even the most hardened spectators held their breath, had she made the slightest mistake in jumping, the huge horns would have pierced her body like swords. But she had reckoned rightly: she fell between the horns unhurt.

The bull left the trough and shook his head, jumping fiercely to shake off the dancer. But she held fast, catching at the horns with her arms and legs: one horn was under her armpit, the other between her legs, and balanced thus

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she swung to and fro as on a swing, playing with death

Suddenly she flung herself on to the animal's back, stood on her feet and jumped down He had not had time to turn to her before another dancer leapt upon him, stretched out her arms to the first one, picked her up, threw her over herself on to the bull's back and also jumped off, the first one leapt on again and threw over the second And so they kept flying, in a cloud of dust, now one and now the other, like swallows in mid-air

Quiet applause was heard from the king's tent according to the Cretan custom people clapped with their fingers and not with the palm of their hand And the whole multitude of spectators answered with the same quiet clapping

"*Nefert, nefert!* Charming, charming!" Tuta was delighted "See how they smile they must be in love with each other," he whispered to Tammuzadad, who was sitting next to him in the king's tent

"In love?" The Babylonian smiled his heavy stonelike smile "Why, what do you think?"

"I think that such a pretty boy and girl "

"You must be short-sighted, my lord, or is it that you cannot see for the dust? They are not a boy and a girl"

Tuta looked more carefully

"Perdition take them, the rascals—there is no making out the man from the woman" He laughed quietly, looking round in the direction where the monster with the head of a bull, the King-Queen Idomin, was sitting among his eunuchs

Tamu was smiling, too But when, with an habitual gesture, he raised his hand to the linen bandage round his neck his face twitched suddenly, so that Tuta asked sympathetically

"Does it still hurt?"

"Yes, it does," Tamu answered, and he remembered how on that awful night in the Mother's cave he had crawled on his knees to the golden-yellow veil "Whosoever lifteth the veil from my face shall die" He lifted it—he died And he was dying now In the daylight, under thousands of eyes, her naked body, neither a man's nor a woman's—both together —was as full of dread for him as then "What are you, what are you, Lilith?"

"Do you know these girls?" Tuta inquired

Tamu did not answer, he did not seem to hear He got up without speaking and walked away One of the eunuchs answered for him

"The older one is Dio, daughter of Aridoel, and the younger is Eoia, daughter of Itobal"

It was growing dusk, and the horns of the moon shining in the sky showed up the black shadows of the bull's horns on the white sand of the

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arena, when the sound of a trumpet—a triton's shell—proclaimed the end of the games. The bulls were driven to the stables—the gentler ones were led by the rings fixed in their nostrils and the fierce were lassooed.

Dancers collected in the empty arena in front of the king's tent waiting for him to decide who was the winner.

Only three dancers out of thirteen had been carried away wounded, no one was killed—which was regarded as a bad omen—the god had not accepted a sacrifice, and yet human sacrifice was the chief object of the sacred games.

The purple hangings of the king's tent, translucent like amethyst with the light of the torches within, were drawn apart and the king's bull's head peeped out. None except the eunuchs of his household ever saw the king's human face or heard his voice. But even the bull's face caused the people to cover their faces with their hands in awe and reverence to see the god was to die. And a whisper was heard like the rustling of trees in the night.

“Have mercy upon us, King-Queen!”

In the sudden stillness that followed someone cried behind the king's tent,

“Eoia, daughter of Itobal, rejoice!”

The winner came forward, fell on her knees, and a wreath of white saffron-flowers descended upon her from the tent.

The bloody sacrifice did not take place—let there be then a bloodless one the saffron-wreath was the marriage-wreath of the Sun-Bull's bride, the goddess of the full Moon, Pasiphae, the Light-giving

“Eoia, daughter of Itobal, rejoice! Rejoice, O God's beloved!” repeated the whole multitude of spectators

II

“Don't be afraid, he won't hurt you”

“I know It isn't of that I am afraid”

“Of what, then?”

“May I tell you? You won't be cross, Bee darling?”

“I won't be cross, tell me”

“I am afraid of Wait a minute, let me whisper it in your ear I am afraid of laughing all of a sudden ”

“Laughing? But aren't you terrified?”

“Yes, I am, and yet I am amused It is a wooden thing on wheels, covered with hide quite like a real cow—only it cannot walk if it is pushed from behind, it rolls, the wheels will creak and I shall laugh But I mustn't, must I?”

“You mustn't”

“There, you see And if I mustn't, I shall

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want to all the more—it is like being tickled, one can't help laughing And then after I get into her belly and peep out—I can, you know, there are little holes in her eyes—I shall see him come up, thrust his head against hers, sniff and snort—and I will laugh again, straight in the god's face ”

“Well, laugh, then, don't be afraid, my little girl! God loves the laughter of children—he is like a little child himself ”

“One may not laugh before men, but may before him ”

“Yes He is wise and good—he knows all things ”

“Yes, he does I brought some fresh straw into his stable to-day, and he looked at me just with one eye in a way that quite frightened me he knows everything only he cannot tell ”

“To-night he will tell you everything Do you believe? ”

“I believe I shall enter the heifer's womb like the dead enter the womb of the earth, and I shall know all things, as the dead know,” Eoia answered in a tone of prayer, and recalled what Zenra the Egyptian, Dio's nurse, had told her

The daughter of Menkaur, king of Egypt, had said to her father as she lay dying in the flower of her youth “Do not put me into the damp earth lest I feel lonely there, but keep me in

your palace and take me out into the sunshine, so that even when dead I should see the sun of the living " King Menkaur did as she told him, he put his daughter's mummy into the belly of the Heavenly Heifer Hator, carved out of the wood of sycamore, adorned with gold and purple and with a golden disk of the sun between its horns, he placed it in his palace, in a dark chamber lighted with lamps, once a year, in the days of mourning for Osiris, they moved it into the yard and opened the little window made in its back so that the ray of sunlight fell right upon the dead girl's face for even to the dead it is sweet to see the sun of the living

"Rejoice, Eoia!" said Dio, also in the tone of prayer "You shall be in the heifer's womb like the dead in the womb of the earth, like a babe in its mother's womb you shall die and be born into eternal life!"

In a wooden cell, dark and narrow like a coffin and saturated with the smell of bulls' stables and warm manure, the priestess Dio was dressing the novice Eoia in white vestments, crowning her with white saffron-flowers like a bride to be led to the altar

Seeing them together it was easy to make a mistake and take them for a boy and a girl, as Tuta had done By the side of Dio, Eoia seemed almost a child her slender body was much too flexible, like the stem of a water-flower, the

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red hair with the dim glitter of old gold was too fine, the white skin coloured with the rosy glow of the blood was too transparent, she had childish freckles round her dark eyes, but the expression of sorrow and passion in them was not childish.

When Dio said just now "you shall die," the familiar pain of insatiable pity, inexpiable guilt, pierced her heart. She embraced Eoia and kissed her on the eyes, feeling that the girl surrendered herself to her as completely as the seaweed yields to the swell of a deep wave. Eoia threw back her head and closed her eyes under the kiss, a ray of the moon fell upon her face and it turned pale like the face of the dead.

"What am I doing to her?" Dio thought, with prophetic horror. "Am I preparing a bride for the marriage-feast or a victim for the slaughter?"

The clatter of cymbals and the squealing of flutes was heard from a distance. Dio and Eoia came out into the arena with the empty semi-circles of seats around it, dazzling white under the rays of the full moon.

The procession of priestesses of the Moon started out of the main gateway, under the king's tent. Wearing conical tiaras, dresses cut down to the waist so that the breasts were bare, wide bell-shaped skirts with many-coloured frills, embroidered in front with silver flowers.

of saffron on a background of gold, they themselves looked in this strange apparel, glittering with moonlit silver and gold, like some fantastic moonlit flowers

They brought out the dummy of the heifer on wheels, a huge thing made of cypress-wood and covered with real white cow-hide, they put it in the middle of the arena, placing before it three symbols the double-edged axe, the symbol of the immolated Son, two bull's horns of clay, with three shoots of vine—three Trees of Life—between them, the symbol of the unutterable Father, and three little columns with one common basis and three doves upon them—the symbol of the Mother Thus was the mystery of the divine numbers repeated three times over Three in One

A venerable-looking woman, Mother Anahita, the mistress of the games, went up to Eoia, took her by the hand and, leading her up to the heifer, asked her

“Are you pure from animal food, maiden?”

“I am,” answered Eoia

“Are you pure from human blood, maiden?”

“I am”

“Are you pure from cohabitation with man, maiden?”

“I am”

“Enter the marriage-chamber, then Rejoice, O God's beloved!”

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A trap-door was open in the Heifer's back
Eoia climbed up to it by a ladder, went down
into the empty belly and the trap-door closed
upon her

The flutes squealed, the cymbals clanged, the
priestesses of the Moon, slowly, like moonbeams
through the clouds of night, glided through the
coils of the dance, circling round the Heifer,
twisting about her like a garland of moonlit
flowers and singing the song to the Bride of the
Sun-Bull—the full Moon, Pasiphae, the Light-
giving

Rejoice O virgin pure
Prepare the marriage bed!
The wrath of heavenly anger
Averted be by love
From the dark cove
Hearest thou O maid
Of the bull's bellowing
Furious roar?
The Bull the Bull the Bull
Will loving cover thee
In the divine Heifer's womb
In a triumphal song
We now glorify thee
O thou God's elected
Slain for God's own sake
Mysterious Virgin Mother!

The procession moved away, the singing died
down, and moonlit stillness reigned in the
empty arena

Suddenly the black shadows of a bull's horns
moved across the white sand White as the white

foam of the sea in the light of the moon, the Bull approached the Heifer

Lying on a soft bed of freshly-mown grass in the coffin-like cavity fragrant of cypress-wood, with a cleverly-made inlet for air, Eoia peeped through the eye-hole and saw the bull's face so near that he seemed to breathe right into her face But she was not frightened and she did not laugh—she merely smiled “How big he is and yet he smells of milk like a calf! Poor dear, poor dear!” She suddenly remembered the last look of the sacrificial victims as they were being slain, and the familiar pain of inexpiable guilt, insatiable pity pierced her heart—and together with the pain, a gentle ecstasy, like the soft radiance of the Light-giving Moon she knew that God was in the victim

The Bull walked away from the Heifer he felt she was not real, he was wiser than people thought

Sleepy, he walked along the arena and lay down on the ground, bellowing gently, as though sighing with love, he raised his eyes to the Light-giver, his Beloved—then under her kiss he closed them and went to sleep so sweetly as only the blutes and the gods can sleep

Eoia too slept sweetly in the Heifer's belly She dreamed that the Maiden-Youth was kissing her on the eyes and that under His-Her kiss she was dying and being born again into eternal life

III

"Dio will love you, only you must kill the little bitch," Dio's uncle, Kinir, son of Uamar, a venerable-looking old man, owner of the largest wine- and oil-cellars at Knossos, was saying to Tammuzadad, the iron merchant

"What bitch?" asked Tamu

"Eoia"

"Why should I kill her?"

"To free Dio from the spell she has cast a spell on her, bewitched her Don't you see, they are always together, there is no separating them These witches have powerful charms"

"Is Eoia a witch?"

"I should think she is! I never go past her without spitting to protect myself Remember so long as that girl lives you shall not have the slightest chance with Dio"

"But how is she to be killed?"

"I know how, and I will do it for you, only tell me that you agree"

"No, tell me how"

"Swear that you won't betray me"

"I will not swear, but I give you my word I will not betray you"

"This is what I will do I shall get hold of the right people at the arena, they will make the bull drunk, and when she comes out to dance

with him he will gore her And it will be no one's fault, merely a sacrifice pleasing to God "

"So simple as all that! Well, and if it is found out?"

"I shall be put to death, but no blame will be attached to you "

"For whose sake, then, will you be taking all this trouble?"

"For Dio's She cannot have a better husband than you "

"Are you so fond of her?"

"I am I am all she has she is alone in the world, she has neither father nor mother"

Tamu smiled, recalling what Zenra, Dio's nurse, had told him one night the old man had got into his niece's bedroom and wanted to dishonour her, but she beat him like a dog and nearly killed him

"Is it only for her sake you are going to do it?"

"No, for your sake as well "

"And what am I to you?"

"You are a great man, Tammuzadad, son of Ishtarraman You have found iron, and iron will conquer the world Take me as a partner, merchant, we will send a ship for iron together Only say 'yes,' and Dio will be yours Well, agreed?"

"No, I must think it over "

Eoia was a native of northern Thrace and

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came of the tribe of Edonians, neighbours of Pelasgians, Achaeans, Danaans and other Iron-men

At their religious festivals Edonian women and girls ran about the woods and mountains at night dancing a frenzied dance, and, possessed by the god Zagreus-Bacchus, who had been torn to pieces, they dismembered living victims, calves or lambs, ate raw flesh and drank warm blood to communicate with God

Once, after dancing all night, they ran down to the seashore, fell exhausted on a sand-bank, like a flock of birds driven by a storm, and sank into a deathlike sleep

Phoenicians, the cunning guests of the sea, were sailing past, they saw the women from a distance, landed quietly, fell upon them as hawks fall upon doves, and were already dragging them to the ship when the shepherds from the neighbouring valleys heard the cries of the women and rescued them all except Zemla, daughter of Oigig, an Edonian elder

Zemla struggled in captivity like a bird in a net, she sought to kill herself But she calmed down, feeling that a child stirred under her heart, and for its sake she wanted to live She believed that she had conceived by a god, but her friends thought it was by a shepherd in her father's service It frequently happened that under the light of the stars, in some forest

valley, a frenzied bacchante would unite herself in love, she did not know with whom, like an animal with its mate or a goddess with a god

Two months later the Phoenicians returned to their native harbour Byblos-Gebal, at the foot of Lebanon, and there they sold Zemla to Itobal, the priest of Moloch and Astarte In his house she gave birth to a daughter, Eoia

Itobal, an old widower, had a kind heart, though he did sacrifice little children to Moloch He had been unhappy about it for many years, but then he became used to it, comforting himself by the reflection that Abraham, who, like himself, was a Canaanite priest of the Fiery Baal, had been called the friend of God for making the same holy and terrible sacrifice

Itobal was kind to Zemla he raised her to the honourable rank of a consecrated harlot in the temple of Astarte He loved Eoia as though she had been his own daughter, and when she grew older he adopted her legally

In the sacred grove of Astarte, where the charred bones of the little children sacrificed to the god were buried and their pure souls seemed to rise up to heaven in the fragrance of violets, Eoia, daughter of Itobal, like another violet, grew and blossomed

She was turned twelve when priestess Dio, daughter of Aridoel, came by boat from Knossos with gifts and sacrifices for Astarte, whom the

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Cretans worshipped as their Great Mother Dio spent about a month in the house of the priest Itobal. She hardly spoke to Eoia, but was conscious that the child had fallen in love with her in the way that children do and that seems absurd to grown-up people.

On the last evening before Dio's departure, when they were left alone in the grove of Astarte, she said to Eoia,

"Would you like me to take you to the Island with me?"

"How—take me? For good?"

"For good."

Eoia looked long at her without speaking and at last answered quietly,

"Yes, take me."

"But they won't let you go."

"No, they won't," Eoia agreed. She was silent again, and after thinking a little said still more quietly,

"I shall run away."

"You won't, why, you love your father and mother."

"But I—" Eoia began and broke off, she flushed crimson and then turned pale.

"I love you more," she whispered passionately.

"Foolish little thing!" Dio laughed, and as she put her arms round the girl, kissing her eyes and the childish freckles round the eyes, she felt that Eoia was giving herself to her as

completely as the seaweed yields to the swell of a deep wave "Foolish little thing, you should not talk like this!"

"Yes, I should I love you only," Eoia said, with an intensity of love strange in a child "Take me with you Say one word and I will run away!"

The souls of the burned children were rising to heaven in the fragrance of violets, and in the sky, still light and starless between the dark cypresses, one star only was shining, the evening star of the Maiden-Youth

Dio looked at it, laughing no longer she gently pushed the little girl away and walked off quickly without speaking

And next day, when the ship was so far out at sea that the shore was no longer visible, she learned that Eoia was on board she had bribed the pilot with a gold necklace, a present from her father, and he hid her away in the bales of merchandise

"You wretched girl, you mad creature, what have you done?" Dio scolded her, but looking into Eoia's face she understood that the child was no more to be blamed than a sleep-walker walking on the edge of a precipice

The sailors refused to go back for the sake of a little girl, a stranger to them, and the ship did not call at any harbour till it reached Crete Dio had decided to send her back with the first

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ship that would leave Knossos But she never did she came to love Eoia as madly as Eoia loved her

In the island of Crete, on Mount Dicte, near the cave where the divine Babe was born, there was a holy convent, the Mother's Beehive Virgin recluses lived there under the surveillance of the Great Bee, the high priestess Each priestess had a novice Dio had Eoia She spent four years in the convent learning divine wisdom by word of mouth, but mostly by dancing, for mute dance is wiser than all the words of men

At the end of the first year Itobal, who had accidentally learned where his adopted daughter was, came to Knossos and asked for her to be given back to him as a runaway slave He was told that in the Beehive there were no slaves, but only holy virgins under the Mother's holy shield, and that they were not given away to anyone

He left Crete having cursed his daughter and sent word to her that she had killed her mother Zemla had died of grieving for her

The dancers for the bulls' games in the Knossos arena were recruited from the priestesses and novices Eoia too was chosen

Leaving the Beehive she settled in Dio's country house by the Knossos harbour, right on the beach, among cypress-groves, vineyards and saffron-gardens

IV

ON the third day after Eoia's marriage with the God-Bull, Dio performed over her the sacred rite of bathing in the sea

Taking the wedding-dress off her, she threw it in the waves, took some sea-water in the cup, sprinkled it over Eoia and read the prayer

Mother shelter in thy love
The Kingdom of the Seas
And to your children all
Help and protection give
Hear the despairing cry
Of them who perish at sea
And of the raging storm
Subdue the fierce wrath
Send us gentle breezes
Speed on its way
The white sul to day
Save us all have mercy Mother
Give us all thy grace!'

According to the rite the priestess and the novice had to bathe together in the sea

They had long been accustomed in dancing to see each other almost naked, but neither had yet seen the other quite naked. When Eoia had taken off the last garment she suddenly felt ashamed and made haste to get into the sea. Dio followed her.

The bay bit deep into the land. The noise of the breakers was heard in the distance. There

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the waves surged and moaned, covering the sharp rocks with salty spray But here in the bay it was still, the water, like a block of bluish-green glass, hardly stirred and was so transparent that each stone, each shell, could be seen on the bottom

Water did not conceal the nakedness of the bathers, but its innocent coolness extinguished the shame

They both could swim like fishes They played about like children, splashing each other with the sapphire spray, laughing, shouting, and screaming with joy, they were as happy as though they had returned to their native country they felt more at home in the sea than on land

They swam out to the rocks, climbed on to the slippery stones overgrown with black-green hairy seaweed and greedily inhaled its oyster-like salty freshness They turned their backs to the waves—and the roaring, galloping wave, shining with white foam, covered them like the Bull, Pasiphae's lover

They dived like fishes Looking under the water they could hardly recognise each other their bodies and faces seemed shadowy, Eoia's white body looked silvery-blue, and dark-skinned Dio's silvery-pink, both were like flowers at the bottom of the sea

And the submarine life seethed mysteriously

round them The fishes stared with their round eyes as they swam past, the sea-urchin huddled itself together, the star-fish scintillated, the opalescent medusa seemed to be melting away, the molluscs crawled out of their shells, long tendrils, feelers, antennae of unseen creatures were stretching from behind the thickets of corals, a pair of eyes glittered in the dark like a piece of rotten wood

They were afraid with a holy fear, as though there lay open before them the divine womb of the Mother, the mysterious depths in which all that was, that is and that will be, is conceived

And the light of the sun seemed crude after the twilight under water, and the heat of the sun seemed deadly But being of the earth they came back to the earth, they swam ashore and lay on the sand, no longer ashamed of their nakedness

Suddenly Eoia jumped up with a cry

“He is looking! He is looking!”

And she threw a stone into a myrtle-bush that spread its thick growth over the top of the cliff

“Who?” asked Dio

“He! he! Tammuzadad”

Dio too jumped up Her face lit up by anger was as menacing as the face of Britomartis herself, the divine Virgin-Huntress With one hand she seized her golden-yellow veil,

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embroidered with silver bees—Tamu recognised it—and with another her spear From old habit as huntress she never left home without spear or arrows She threw it into the bush with such force that it might have killed a man But she came back to herself at once, turned pale, covered her eyes with her hands so as not to see, and whispered in terror

“Tamu, my brother, what have you done?”

“It is all right, don’t fear, he has run away,” said Eoia, also turning pale “How frightened you were! I did not know you loved him so much”

The same day Tammuzadad said to Kinir, son of Uamar

“Do you remember what we were talking about the other day?”

“Yes, I remember”

“Give me your hand”

Kinir held out his hand Tamu struck it as merchants do at sales and said

“I take you for partner, Kinir, son of Uamar, we will send together a ship for iron Agreed?”

Not yet believing in his happiness, Kinir looked at him with greedy eyes from under his brows

“Of course it is agreed, of course it is! Oh, my lord, may the gods reward you!” he cried with

a sob, and fell to kissing Tammuzadad's hands
“And shall I kill the little bitch?”

Tamu did not answer at once He lowered his eyes as though lost in thought He remembered—he saw on the sand by the beach “the boy and girl” were lying in each other's arms, while he, in the bush on the cliff, had fallen on the ground, face downwards, and was clawing it with his nails like one mortally wounded, ready to bite it, according to the ancient curse “thou shalt bite the earth” And all of a sudden a spear flew just over his head Oh, if it only had been a little lower!

“And shall I kill the little bitch?” Kınır repeated, thinking that he had not heard

Slowly, with an effort, Tammuzadad raised his eyes to him, and knowing that it would be as he said, he answered

“Kill her”

V

THE wail is raised for Tammuz far away
The mother-goat and the kid are slain
The mother sheep and the lamb are slain
The wail is raised for the beloved Son

Engur, son of Nurdahan, sang in the burnt-up field on the flat top of the cliff by the bay where in the morning of that day Dio and Eoia were bathing

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An old slave of Ishtarraman, Engur ran away with Tamu when Tamu killed, or thought that he had killed, his father Engur sailed with him in the far-off seas to bring iron, served him faithfully, but had grown old and half-witted and was of no more use At Tamu's request Dio engaged him as a shepherd

The warm fragrance of the heather, mint, wormwood, hart's clover and the smell of sheep, reminding the shepherd of his native haunts in the plains of Senaahr, was mingled with the salty freshness of the sea The clouds rose slowly from behind the purplish hills, the sheep and goats grazed slowly, the sounds of the pipe, monotonously sad, fell slowly one after the other, like tear after tear

The wail is raised for the beloved Son
O tree that had no moisture in the garden
That never raised its crown in the fields
O plant that never tasted running water
O flower plucked out by the roots!

The days of lamentation for Tammuz came every year when the grasses and flowers in the native plains of Senaahr withered dry with the heat of the summer Engur remembered it here too, in the land of exile His pipe wept all day —stopped for a little while and then began again

The burning sunset was fading away in a haze of crimson smoke above the chain of the

parched hills, the evening star of the Youth-Maiden, Tammuz-Ishtar, white as the sun, was alight in the sky, and the old shepherd still sang his endless complaint about the faded flower, the dead god Tammuz

Dead is our Lord dead is Tammuz!
 Dogs wander about in his ruined house
 Ravens flock to his funeral feast
 The roar of the tempest is a dirge
 The mournful pipe weeps in the storm
 O the heart of the Lord! O the pierced ribs!

Sitting on the edge of the cliff by the sea, Dio and Eoia listened in silence. So still was the dying sunset, so still the light of the star and the weeping of the pipe, that stillness possessed them too.

"What is he weeping about?" asked Eoia.

"The dead god Tammuz," answered Dio.

"Tammuz, Osiris, Attis, Adon of Canaan and your Adun, and our Zagreus-Dionysos—do all gods die?"

"All, or One in all."

"Why?"

"You know why?"

"Yes, I know so as to rise again and raise up the dead, this is what they teach on the Mountain. But I am stupid, I don't understand."

"Don't understand how He rose from the dead?"

"No, how He died. How can God die?"

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"You know that too"

"I know He was born a man so that He could die Quite like a man?"

"Quite"

"Like me, like you, like everyone?"

"Like everyone"

"And He lived here, in your Island?"

"Yes"

"Yes, of course! The cave where He was born is here, and the sepulchre in which He was buried, so He must have lived here "

"Why do you talk like this—as though you didn't believe?"

"Yes, I believe Sometimes I do and sometimes I don't I don't know I know nothing" The girl, almost a child, said the same thing as the wise and sad Tamu

"And how did He die?" Eoia went on "They say a boar killed Him when He was hunting, but this is a mere fable How did He die really?"

"I don't know"

"Yes, you do Tell me, Bee darling!"

And putting her lips to Dio's ear, she asked in a whisper

"Men killed Him, didn't they?"

Dio bowed her head without speaking

"O the heart of the Lord! O the pierced ribs!"—moaned the pipe

"What a dreadful wail And why did they kill Him?" Eoia asked again, and without waiting for an answer whispered, with a growing terror

"My mother told me the god Zagreus-Dionysos was born as a man—as Oipheus the singer He sang so sweetly that beasts and stones listened to him, but men killed him they tore him to pieces and threw fragments of his body to the four quarters of the earth Have you heard about Oipheus?"

"Yes He has been to our Island, too"

"Orpheus means the Dark One Why 'the Dark'?"

"Men called him so in mockery, for the light seemed to them darkness"

"Was this why they killed him?"

"Yes"

"And if He came again, they would again kill Him?"

"They would"

"And Zenra says," Eoia recalled, "that Osiris too was killed by his own brother Set, who also tore him to pieces and threw fragments of his body to the four quarters of the earth"

She paused, then took Dio by the hand, and looking at the talisman suspended from her bracelet, an amethyst with the sign of the Svastika carved upon it, she asked

"What have you here? His sign?"

"Yes"

"I see—the four lines, the four quarters of the earth where His members are scattered
And did the Father know that the Son would be killed and dismembered?"

"Yes, He knew"

"And did the Mother know?"

"Yes, She also knew"

"How terrible it is, little Bee, how terrible!
The Father and the Mother gave their Son to the slaughter! It is the same thing in heaven as on earth, and there is no escaping from it! Do you remember my father Itobal?"

"Yes, I remember him"

"He is as kind as could be, he would not hurt a fly, and yet he burns little children! The smell of children's flesh burning is 'a sweet savour unto the Lord.' And our forefather Abraham was called the friend of God because he was ready to kill his own son! The fathers and mothers themselves bring the children to sacrifice and don't cry while they are burning—or, if they do, the trumpets blow, the cymbals clang, the priests sing a song to the Lord so that the mothers' weeping should not be heard! But the Mother does hear all the same! The smell of the children's burning flesh rises up to the Mother!"

"Be silent, don't speak of this!" said Dio, as peremptorily and menacingly as she had done

on the Mountain, in the forest, in conversation with the godless Tamu

"Not speak of it? May I not think of it either?" Eoia whispered

"No, you may not"

"But how can I help thinking, little Bee, how can I? The thoughts come of themselves "

She paused, and then spoke as it were calmly and thoughtfully

"My mother had a vase that came from her own home, a Thracian pitcher—I seem to see it now it was an old round earthenware vase with a neck and a broken handle When the brigands dragged her to the ship they took the vase too, thinking it had some precious ointment in it, but when they saw it was empty they gave it back to her When I was little I used to look at the drawing upon it, red on a black ground—I could not make it out three men, two at either side, one, with a crown of vine-leaves and a wand in his hand like Dionysos, stands smiling, another one is running away, frightened, and a third one, in the middle, holds a dead boy in his arms The men were badly drawn, but the boy so well that one could not take one's eyes off him One could see he had just been killed, his body, still soft and warm, was quite limp, his head was thrown back, his hair, long like a girl's, hung down, and his face was like a god's The man was holding him with

one arm and with the other he had torn off the boy's hand and was just going to eat it—‘What is he doing to the boy? Why is he eating him?’ I kept asking mother ‘Children must not know this,’ she would say ‘Wait, you shall know when you are grown up’ Well, I do know it now before God was born as man He was torn and devoured by the Terrible Ones of the Under-world And in the Zagreus mysteries Thyades, the priestesses, possessed by God, tear to pieces and devour a living victim When mother told me this I was so frightened that I did not dare to ask her whether the victim was a man or an animal ”

Eoia was looking at the evening star as she spoke Suddenly she turned to Dio, looked her straight in the eyes, and asked in almost the same words as the godless Tamu had done that time in the forest

“And is it true, Bee, that here, in the Island too, fathers and mothers sacrifice their children?”

“Be silent, don't dare!” Dio exclaimed, as she had done then “If you say another word ”

“What then?” said Eoia defiantly, “you won't love me? But you don't love me as it is Do you suppose I don't know? You love Tamu, your brother, and not me And do you remember you told me that when I enter the

Heifer's bosom the god will tell me everything?
Well, he has told me"

"Told you what?"

"You know yourself that if God is what men
think He is, He is not God but the devil!"

"Be silent, be silent, you accursed godless
creature!"

Dio raised her arm as though to strike Her
face looked so terrible that Eoia thought "She
will kill me Well, so be it It is either he or I!"
and she buried her face in her hands Dio did
the same

They sat so for a long time without speaking
The pipe had grown silent, too Everything was
still Only the sea breathed, scarcely perceptibly
In the falling dusk the salty freshness of the
waves was fresher than ever, the warm frag-
rance of heather sweeter and the white dazzling
star still whiter in the crimson haze of sunset

Suddenly Dio heard that Eoia was crying She
uncovered her face and turned to her

"What is it? Why are you crying?"

Eoia did not answer, but cried still more
bitterly Dio put her arms round her and felt
that the whole of her slender body was
quivering with sobs like a frightened bird
struggling in one's hand

"You don't love me! You don't love me!"
She was weeping so bitterly that her whole
soul seemed to dissolve itself in tears, as the soul

of one mortally wounded dissolves away in blood And the familiar pain of inexpiable guilt, insatiable pity, pierced Dio's heart

She held her closer, hugged her, kissed her head, stroked her hair, repeating the meaningless tender words with which a mother comforts a weeping child

"There, there, my sweet little girl, my dear little bird, my darling goldfish, my white butterfly! There, give over, you mustn't cry Don't you see that I love you?"

And she wept, too Eoia looked at her, gave a last sob and stopped crying

"You love me? Really?" She smiled through her tears "And him?"

"Silly little thing, as though I could love him as much as I love you!"

"Oh, Bee darling, do love me! I don't mind how, only love me! It is not for long, you know I keep thinking I"

"What? Tell me?"

"I think I shall soon be dead You know, I had a dream the other night, I dreamt that my mother was looking for me, trying to catch me and could not her eyes were open but did not see, like the eyes of the dead And I was very much afraid of her, and thought, 'If she catches me, I shall die of fear' And all at once she did catch me, and I was not afraid at all, but as happy as I am with you just now And she

kissed and caressed me exactly as you did, and said the very same words, ‘My little bird, my darling goldfish, my white butterfly, don’t you see how I love you?’ And she cried ‘And I woke up and cried with joy Well, you see, little Bee, this means that I shall soon be dead’”

Dio was going to say something, but she had no words, she merely thought, “Well, I shall die with her, too Perhaps it will be better so one cannot live and love as we do We have killed the earthly mother—the Heavenly Mother will not forgive it”

All at once the pipe wailed again

The wail is raised for the beloved Son
The wail for the fields that bear no corn
The wail for the streams that are dried up
The wail for the ponds where there is no fish
The wail for the woods where no tamarisk blows
The wail for the seas where no ships sail
The wail for the gardens where no wine flows
The wail for the perishing mothers and children

“He laments as though God had died and did not rise again,” said Eoia, and asked, after a pause

“Bee darling, why don’t you want to tell me all?”

“Tell you what?”

“Why, of how He died and rose again You know it all, don’t you?”

“No, I don’t”

“Who knows, then?”

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"No one," said Dio, and then added, after thinking a little "Perhaps only one man in the world knows about Him"

"Who?"

"The king of Egypt, Akhnaton"

THE BACCHANTE

THE BACCHANTE

I



ONE night Tuta had a terrible dream he dreamt he was sitting on the throne according to Idom'in's prophecy "Rejoice, Tutankhamon, king of Egypt!" Suddenly there was a crash, a clap of thunder, and he fell, head foremost, into an abyss

He woke up in terror, heard cries, and, thinking, half-awake, that they came from the adjoining room, jumped out of bed

"Ani, Ani!" He called his secretary "What is it, do you hear? Is it an earthquake? Run quick and find out!"

Ani ran and came back to reassure him the earth was quite firm, but the people were wailing because the days of weeping for Adun had come

"Queer people!" Tuta was surprised "They scream as though something dreadful had really happened"

He got into bed again, but could not sleep any more, listening to the shrieks

When it was daylight he ordered a litter to be brought and went to listen to the wailing

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He met Tamu on the way and invited him to come along

Throughout the palace and the town men and women were running as though in search of someone, or, sitting at the holy gates, were striking themselves on the breast, tearing their hair, weeping and wailing, to the plaintive music of the funeral-pipes

“Aii Adun! Aii Adun!”

People put earthenware vases with delicate flowers in the blaze of the sun that they might fade all the sooner, and wept over them, as though conscious that the whole great Kingdom of the Seus would perish like Adun’s short-lived flower

“O thou flower, plucked out by the roots!”

And within the holy gates the priestesses in a frenzied dance were pulling out of the earthenware sacrificial tubs the holy trees of Adun that had been planted in them, the god was in each one of the trees pulling out the tree they were killing God, the Victim

Tamu listened to their wail

“Alas, my Brother! Alas, my Sister! my Beloved! O two-horned Moon! O two-edged Axe! Aduna-Adun!” cried the mourners

“The cursed Kingdom of the cursed Lilith!” he muttered through his teeth

“What are you saying?” Tuta asked

“I am saying that the fools will weep for six

days because twice two is four, and on the seventh day they will rejoice because twice two is five!"

"What does it mean?"

"It means that if a man is dead, twice two is four, and if he is risen from the dead, twice two is five"

"Don't you believe that He rose from the dead?"

"I deal in iron and I know that faith will not break iron"

On the seventh day, the day of resurrection, Tuta went to Mount Dicte to take King Akhnaton's gift to the god Adun

Within one and a half day's journey from Knossos, on the southern slopes of Mount Ida, above a valley round as a cauldron—once the bottom of a lake—was the holiest spot in Crete, the cave where the infant God was born

A narrow path went up to it along steep rocks where goats bleated and bees hummed, just as in the ancient days when the goat Amalthea suckled the infant God and the bees of Melissa fed Him with the honey of mountain flowers The cauldron-shaped valley below was hot as a baking-oven, though here, above, one could already feel the first breath of the eternal snow But here too everything was parched up, naked and dead, only, at the entrance to

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the cave, a solitary poplar looked ever fresh and green like the Tree of Life in Paradise

Tuta was surrounded by Bees, the priestesses, young and old Dio was among them He went up to her and asked for a drink there was a spring within the holy enclosure She filled a cup with water and gave it to him

"Well, what have you decided, my daughter —are you coming to Egypt with me?" Tuta asked her

"Yes, if the king and the great priestess allow me"

"The king has already given permission, the great priestess will not refuse either But will you change your mind?"

"No, I will not Why do you distrust me?"

"Because young girls have many thoughts"

"I have only one"

"Which?"

She wanted to say "To see king Akhnaton, the greatest of the sons of men," but, glancing at Tuta, she felt it would be better not to talk to him about it

"To go, to go!" she said so joyfully that he too was glad He would have something to boast of when he came home the king of Egypt had never yet seen a dancer like Dio, no one had ever brought him so fine a gift as this pearl of the Kingdom of the Seas

"Mother Akakalla is waiting for you, let us

go," said Dio, and led him by the hand into the cave

Coming suddenly from the daylight into the subterranean night Tuta felt blind, and when he began to see again the night was lit up by the crimson flame of torches. But the cave was so large that its farthest corners remained in darkness and the vault seemed to be an opening into the dark night. Decrepit old women—priestesses—stood in two rows holding torches. As he passed between them Tuta felt his feet sinking into something soft like down—it was the thousand-year-old deposit of the ashes of burnt victims.

To the right of the entrance rose a primitive altar—a square heap of stones. The first worshippers of the Mother, the savage cave-dwellers, must have erected it in immemorial antiquity. Both animal and human sacrifices were offered here. To the left sparkled a white mass of stalactites, rising from the ground and hanging from the top, huge like trunks of trees. In that direction lay another cave, the lower one—the Holy of Holies, the open womb, as it were, of Mother Earth, the terrible door from this world into the next. No one ever looked into it except the great priestess. It was there that the divine Babe was born.

In the depths of the upper cave, on a low seat of stone, sat an old woman, older than all the

others, enormously stout, swollen with yellow fat, as though with dropsy On her head she wore a conical felt cap with slanting red and yellow stripes, the dress, cut to the waist, laid bare two hideous breasts—like two cow's udders or empty leather bags, dark brown, wrinkled and flat like the teats of a pregnant bitch Her whole body was covered with metallic shining ropes

This was Mother Akakalla, the great priestess Tuta had heard a great deal about her king Idomin hated her, suspecting her of secret relations with his brother Sarpedomin, the exile, but the people loved and revered her, calling her wise and holy She had once disputed the king's throne she remembered the days when women reigned in the Kingdom of the Seas according to the ancient commandment of the Mother "Let the husband obey his wife"

With the help of several priestesses, who supported her by the arms, she rose a little from her seat, sighing and groaning, raised her arms to bless Tuta, and all of a sudden the metallic ropes about her moved and crawled Tuta realised that they were snakes Coiled in balls, hoops and knots, they made a girdle round her hips, a necklace round her throat, bracelets round her arms, one hung on her ear like an earring, another, twisting itself round her peaked cap, hung its head over her forehead,

thrusting forward its flat head and quivering tongue

Tuta was frightened, but not very much so, he remembered that the priestesses of Mount Dicte could tame the most poisonous reptiles, removing the poison glands from under their teeth, and that Mother Akakalla was a charmer of snakes

"The Mother of All proclaims a great miracle to men," she began in Cretan, in a sing-song nasal voice, as though repeating a prayer "She proclaims it to the faithful, to her holy people, but she is opposed to those who come with guile and deceit Come unto her, therefore, ye only who are holy and pure in heart, that you may see the work of God—the miracle of resurrection!"

Tuta knelt down and gave her the king's gift, a golden sacrificial dish flat as a shield Mother Akakalla examined it with one eye Only now he noticed that she was blind in the other

The dish had a raised pattern worked round it in circles in the first, outer, circle were the Uraei, Egyptian sacred snakes, in the second, Babylonian angels, in the third, the Cretan double-axes, and in the centre, the sun disk of the god Aton with rays, like human hands, blessing the king of Egypt, Akhnaton, above the disk was an inscription in Cretan characters

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"*Adun-Aton*," and on either side of the king there was an inscription in hieroglyphics

Mother Akakalla read it aloud

"Thou hast captured all the tribes and peoples, bound them with the bonds of love and united them, O only One Thou hast revealed Thy truth to Thy only-begotten Son Akhnaton Neferheperura Uaenra No one knows the Father but the Son "

Suddenly the old woman's face puckered, her lips quivered and a tear fell from her eye She lifted the dish with both hands and kissed it, exclaiming

"Verily, verily, no one knows the Father but the Son Blessed be the only-begotten Son of the Father, Akhnaton Uaenra!"

Then, turning to Dio, she gave her the dish and said "Here he is Do you recognise him?"

Dio gazed into his face, feeling as though after a long parting she were recognising the face of a brother, and kissed it, too

"Go to him, go to him, dear daughter! Your place is with him and not here!" cried Mother Akakalla, and suddenly her solitary eye glowed like a red-hot ember

"Dance before him to the glory of Adun-Aton, kick up your heels as high as you can, like this!"

And, both laughing and crying, she raised her skirt, baring monstrously thick, shapeless

legs and moving them weakly and awkwardly, as though trying to dance.

"And who are you?" she suddenly asked Tuta, in Egyptian, having apparently only just noticed him.

"The king's envoy."

"I know you are his envoy, but what is your name?"

"Tutankhaton."

"Tutankhamon?"

"No, Tutankhaton."

"First there was Amon, now there is Aton, and then there will be Amon again—isn't it so? Miow—miow! Are you fond of cats?"

"Yes, I am."

"I thought so; you are like a cat yourself. And is the Great Mother a Cat with you?"

"We have no Mother; we used to have, but we haven't now."

"How can there be a Son without a Mother?"

"According to the king's doctrine . . ."

"Nonsense. Is he likely to tell you what his doctrine is, you fool!" muttered the old woman in Cretan, and, suddenly flying into a passion, she stamped her feet and brandished her crutch at Tuta. "You lie, dog, son of a dog, godless one! There is no Son without the Mother."

Tuta did not understand the words—he merely understood she was abusing him. He was not offended; he knew one must not be

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offended with a great priestess, every word of abuse from her, or even a blow from her crutch, was a blessing But still he was thinking of how he could best beat a retreat

But the old woman had already calmed down and spoke to him kindly, only there was a gleam of sly mockery in her eye

"Yours is a sure game, my son, you will be king over mice, cat You are just what they need The great shall be humbled and the little shall be exalted Rejoice, Tutankhamon, king of Egypt!"

"The cursed witch! It is as though she had overheard king Idomin!" thought Tuta, surprised, almost dismayed

He spoke about Dio's departure

"She may go and the Mother's blessing be upon her!" the old woman answered, and spoke no more, closing her dim eye as though asleep

Tuta understood that the audience was over He wanted to kiss her hand, but did not venture the snakes swarmed hideously He made a low bow and went out

The others went out, too, at a sign from the great priestess Dio alone remained

"Come here" Mother Akakalla called her "What is on your mind, dear daughter? Why are you sad?"

"I don't know myself, mother My heart is

heavy, I am uneasy ” said Dio, sinking on her knees

“Never mind, after the revels and the sacred dancing you will feel better ”

The revels, dances and night choruses of the Thyades, priestesses, in honour of the resurrected god Adun, took place every year at the end of the summer on Mount Dicte

“Mother, allow me ” Dio began and broke off

“Well, what? Speak ”

“Allow me not to dance ”

“Why not? ”

“I cannot I am impure,” Dio whispered, covering her face with her hands

“How? ” asked the old woman

Dio said nothing Mother Akakalla gently moved her hands away from her face, looked into her eyes, and silently pointed with her finger to the altar Dio turned pale and also, without speaking, bowed her head They understood each other without words

Ten years ago Dio’s brother, baby Iolus, son of Aridoel, was sacrificed at this very altar, in this very cave

The Island had been visited then by terrible disasters war, famine, earthquake, plague Possessed by terror, men did not know how to appease the wrath of the gods They forgot the Mother and the Son and remembered only the

Father—the consuming Fire, as though here too, in the Kingdom of the Seas, the thunder under the earth re-echoed with the heavenly thunder of Mount Sinai “The firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me and ye shall be holy men unto me” Aridoel’s wife, Ephra, for a long time refused to give up her son Iolus At that time Aridoel was sailing in the far-away midnight seas, and for over two years she had been waiting for him, tortured with fear and hope “If you do not give your son you shall never see your husband, choose!” the priestess-prophetess said to her, and Ephra believed her and made her choice—she gave her son And when a few days later she heard that her husband had been drowned she hanged herself

“Can’t you forgive?” asked Mother Akakalla

“I cannot,” Dio answered, and, pressing her face against the old woman’s dark bare breast, wept as helplessly as a child

“Can one ever forgive?” she whispered through her tears

“Yes, one can,” answered the priestess “With one’s reason—no, but in madness—yes But why do you ask, as though you did not know?”

“I don’t”

“Dance the sacred dance and you shall know”

“I have danced and yet I do not know”

"You did not dance in the right way, then"

"But what is the right way?"

"You fool!" the old woman shouted at her, as she had done at Tuta just now, stamping with fury, she tore the cap off her head and strands of grey hair fell over her face Convulsively, as though struggling for breath, she began throwing away the snakes

"And I too am an old fool, no better than you! Impious, godless wretch, I have lived in the world for eighty years, but have done no good to anyone I taught you, thinking that when I am dead there will be someone to take my place, a new great priestess But you are a wet hen and not a great priestess Fie upon you!"

Dio listened to her eagerly rude words healed her pain better than caresses

"And how ought I to dance? Tell me!" she entreated

"I will tell you," said the old woman calmly, like a doctor talking to a patient "Give up your reason and find wisdom, lose yourself and find Him, be beside yourself—and enter into Him, turn blind—and see"

"And have you seen Him?" Dio asked

"Out of the corner of my eye only—a spark fell into the eye, and that is why I lost the sight of it"

Suddenly the whole of her fat body quivered like a jelly with quiet laughter

"How many eyes do you suppose we have? Two? No, four Two in front and two behind These turn blind and the others see It is with those, with those eyes you must look, and not with these Then you will see, and know—and forgive!"

She stirred heavily Dio helped her to get up, gave her her crutches, and the old woman, limping painfully, walked slowly—not towards the exit as Dio thought—but towards the lower cave, the Holy of Holies The descent to it was barred by a stone wall with a bronze door in it Mother Akakalla went up to it, opened it and said

"Go in"

But Dio did not dare to she knew that everyone except the great priestess was forbidden, under the penalty of death, to enter that door

The old woman rudely pushed her in the back She went in, but bowed her head and lowered her eyes so as not to see the Holy of Holies, she only saw the white forest of the stalactites at her feet and the steps carved in stone The old woman pushed her again She went down one step, then another, and a third The steps were steep and slippery, her legs trembled so violently that she was afraid she would fall She stopped

"Lift your head," said the old woman

"Lift it, lift it, you fool, you wretched girl, curse you!" she shouted, and struck Dio on the head with her crutch

Dio lifted her head and shut her eyes

"Look, look! Do you see?" Mother Akakalla asked, holding the torch over her so as to light the depths of the cave Dio made no answer, but closed her eyes still more tightly And the old woman standing above her spoke in a voice so changed that it seemed to Dio it was not Mother Akakalla speaking, but somebody within her

"Remember, remember, remember, Dio, daughter of Aridoel, the great priestess of the Mother God does not torture man, but is Himself tortured in man, God does not kill man, but Himself dies in man Glory be to the Father, the Son and the Mother!"

"To see—to know—to die! So be it, if I could only know!" thought Dio, and she opened her eyes—she saw

The stalactite tears, red in the torchlight, fell like drops of blood, the water at the bottom of the cave looked like a bloody pool, and above it, on the white wall of stalactites, hung, carved in black marble, a four-cornered Cross

II

TUTANKHAMON was examining curiously a small carved crystal seal which the painter Yuti had just bought for him. He held it against the light to see the delicate design better.

"Charming, charming," he was on the point of saying, but he did not say it, the design was too strange.

On a meadow of saffron-flowers, slender girls, flexible like seaweed, in bell-shaped pleated Cretan skirts, that in the carving looked rough and prickly like dry thistles, with wasplike waists and bare pointed breasts, were dancing a frenzied dance that twisted their bodies like a convulsion of mortal pain, of deadly ecstasy.

"Why haven't they any heads?" asked Tuta in surprise, gazing at the clusters of tiny stars scattered where the heads should have been.

"As though one could tell why their craftsmen do things! They are mad," muttered Yuti, frowning.

He did not care to know, but he felt in the madness of the design the madness of the dance—the giddy whirlwind of movement which conceals that which is moving, to perpetuate the momentary, to stop the flying—this was what those lawless men wanted.

"And why are they lifting their arms as though invoking someone?" Tuta asked again

"They are invoking the dead god, it's their magic rites," the painter answered reluctantly

"And is it true that the priestesses here do these things?"

"Yes, it is true. Soon they will be having these rites on the Mountain."

"And will the god appear to them?"

"Somebody does appear, but how can one tell who it is? They do things too abominable to mention."

"That's interesting, very interesting I wish I could see it!"

Tamu came in

"Ah, iron merchant! Not gone yet?"

"I am thinking of going"

"You have done that before! What ties you to this place? Are you in love, eh?"

"That's it. There's nothing you don't know"

"And I know with whom. With two at once Both girls are like boys—you like that kind Itana is a harlot and Dio—a saint, but that does not make much difference!"

"Not much like soft or stale bread for a man who is starving" Tamu smiled

"And why are you so yellow?" Tuta asked, looking at his face more closely "Has your wound healed?"

"Yes"

"Well, then, it must be the liver"

"I expect so And what have you got here?"

"You see, it's a stone A magic one—has a great power of calling up the dead"

Tamu picked up the crystal, also held it up against the light and looked at the drawing

"Curious, isn't it? These are the magic rites of the priestesses here—on the Mountain I was saying I wish I could see it," said Tuta

"Well, let us go to the Mountain and have a look, shall we?"

"Can we?"

"Yes, if you are not afraid"

"Afraid of what?"

"If they catch us, they will kill us women don't like men to see what they do in secret"

"But what do they do?"

"No one knows, but it cannot be anything very good if they don't want people to know"

"And will our friends be here?" Tuta asked, still more interested

"What friends?"

"Dio and Eoia"

"Yes"

"But they are saints"

"What of it? You say yourself there is not much difference between a saint and a harlot" Tamu laughed

He began talking in jest, but he finished in

earnest. "It is interesting!" he thought, like Tuta, and suddenly an eager desire pierced his heart, like the sting of a scorpion: to spy once more on "the boy and the girl"—to find out whether there was a difference between a saint and a harlot. He fancied more and more often that to disgrace his love, to kill it by shamelessness, was his only salvation. "One or the other—to kill love or to kill myself. But no, I will live and die like a dog, and not kill myself!" he thought, revelling in the bitterest of human feelings—contempt for himself.

Next day Tamu brought to Tuta a ship-builder, Kilik, a puny little man with slanting, shifty eyes. Tuta learnt later that Kilik was a notorious scoundrel; but even then, as he looked at him, he remembered the town rumour that the iron merchant had dealings with all sorts of rascals.

For a good present Kilik agreed to arrange the expedition to Mount Dicte. He supplied the wharves with hemp, tar and wool, buying these in small quantities from the shepherds and peasants on the Mountain. One of them, a shepherd called Gingros, promised to take them to the place of the sacred revels and hide them so that they could see it all.

"Rest assured, my lords, you won't regret it, you will enjoy it very much!" Kilik kept repeating.

"Enjoy what? Tell us plainly, maybe it is not worth while for us to go," Tamu asked him

"How could it be not worth while? You will see what no one has ever seen, all the women's mysteries"

He did not, however, say anything plainly, and only winked, wriggled, smiled mysteriously and repeated

"You will enjoy it very much!"

III

THREE days later they set off Kilik went with them as far as the town of Lyktos, at the foot of the Mountain, he refused to go any farther, and having received his present, suddenly vanished without leaving a trace Something must have frightened him

Tuta did not like this, though with a dozen Nubians for a bodyguard, a whole army of Thyades did not seem terrible to him When, just before going, Tammuzadad asked him, "Aren't you afraid?" he answered with dignity, "I am not a coward that I should be afraid of women!"

In Lyktos the old goatherd Gingros was waiting for them They spent the night in the town, and left it in the early morning so as to cross the dangerous Bull's Gorge before dark

The main road led through Inatos, Pyranthos, Gortyna, to Phaistos, the southern capital of Crete. But they soon turned off into overgrown by-paths and then on to the bare stones of the wild heights.

Tuta was carried in a litter at first, but soon had to mount a mule. He disliked doing it. Egyptians did not ride, considering it unseemly to sit astride an animal's back.

Tamu was walking by Gingros and questioning him about the mysteries of the Thyades.

"What do they do on the Mountain?"

"They dance in a divine frenzy."

"And not in drink?"

"What do they want with wine? A sip of spring water, or a breath of the night wind, makes them more drunk than wine."

"Have you seen them dance?"

"Often."

"And have you danced with them?"

"No, they don't admit men. But I dance as they do by myself. I pick out a glade in the forest far away, so that no one can see me and laugh at me, and I jump and dance to the glory of Adun, old goat that I am. Ah, it's fine!"

"Who taught you to dance?"

"One of their own little goats, she left the flock and fell in love with the buck. It was many years ago and yet I cannot forget her."

"Was she beautiful?"

"Not exactly beautiful, but unlike other women The body of a Thyad is like the body of a goddess, any other woman after her is like water after wine"

Tamu looked at the old man white-haired, huge, shaggy, dressed in a shaggy goat-skin, he reminded him of the Babylonian hero Engida, half brute, half god

He does not know the life of men
Like unto a god of beasts
In meadows grazes he with goats
And goes to drink with the herd

"But what do they want? What are they so wild for?" Tamu went on questioning him

"Have you ever seen a heifer go mad with the sting of a gadfly, my son? God's sting in human flesh is like the gadfly's a convulsion goes up one's spine to the top of one's head, like the bite of a scorpion, and the girl is made mad by the god as a heifer by a gadfly"

He paused, smiled as though recalling something amusing, and went on again

"It comes over them, and they don't know themselves what it is A girl will sit at her spinning-wheel, calm and peaceful, thinking of nothing but the wool, and all of a sudden she will hear someone gently calling her from far away, like a lover from the other world She will get up and run—then a second, a third, they will swarm like bees, running and crying

'To the Mountain, to the Mountain!' This frenzy of women spreads like an epidemic from village to village, from town to town."

"And what are the silly men thinking about? Why do they allow it?"

"If you don't allow it, it will be worse: they will brood, lay violent hands on themselves, mothers will kill their children. The three daughters of King Lamos, you know, did not obey the god and go to dance on the Mountain—and they went mad, hungered for human flesh, cast lots about their own children, and the one who drew the lot gave her son to the god—and they tore and devoured the babe like hungry wolves. And have you heard about King Pentheus? King Pentheus, the Sorrowful, lived on the mainland, in the north; he was lacking in reverence for God and mocked the divine mysteries, but the Thyades caught him and rent him to pieces; his own mother was among them, but she did not know her son; she fixed his head on her wand and went dancing with it.... No, my son, God is strong—there is no opposing Him."

"And is it true that on your Mountain, too, they tear people to pieces?"

"Yes, they do. The year before last they rent a young shepherd who was spying on them. They are mad—they don't know what they are doing. It is all the same to them whom they

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come upon—a man or an animal in every victim there is God ”

“God indeed! You mean the devil!” said Tamu indignantly

“Say no evil word, my son He is here—on the Mountain if he hears there will be trouble ”

“Who is here ?”

“You know who ”

“Have you seen him ?”

“No, if I had I would not be alive now ”

“How then do you know that he is here ?”

The old man made no answer and suddenly laughed a kind laugh

“Ah, you silly!”

“Is it me you call silly ?”

“You, my dear ”

“But why ?”

“Because you cannot tell God from the devil ”

“And can you ?”

“I ? I am a worse fool than you are But there are people cleverer than we are I am saying what I have heard from them Who do you think King Pentheus, the Sorrowful, was ?”

“I think he was a man like you or me who did not want to call the devil God ”

“That’s right And you too are Sorrowful You are sorrowful because you are clever and not wise But who is it is sorrowful in you? Who is it suffers in the suffering victim ?”

Tammuzadad looked at him in surprise.

"These are not your own words, are they?"

"No, not my own."

"Whose, then?"

"Do you know Mother Akakalla? She says 'The great victim is the Son; men eat his flesh, drink his blood.' This is why they rend the victim—God."

"God must be slain," Tamu recalled. "God devoured by men; nice men and nice God too!" he said, smiling his heavy stonelike smile as he went away from the old man. The goatherd looked after him and shook his head, as though in pity for the Sorrowful.

They crossed the Bull's Gorge at dusk, descended to the bottom of the precipice, crossed the Goat's Ford, a raging mountain torrent, climbed another hill—like flies crawling up a wall—and came out on to a bare plateau, dead like the desert of a bygone world.

The night came on, still and close, with continual flashes of summer lightning.

"There will be a thunderstorm," Tamu said.

"No, it will blow over: you see, Adun's Head is clear." Gingros pointed to the edge of the plateau where, through a break in the swarming clouds, something blue and shining, like a huge sapphire, could be seen in the flashes of the summer lightning: these were the snows and the glaciers of Mount Dicte.

"They dance there too, on the fields of

snow," he said, recalling the Thyades dancing on the day of the winter solstice, Adun's nativity "Once they were nearly frozen, poor things! I saw them dancing under a snowstorm their bodies, half-naked, were blue with cold, the ivy wands were covered with a thin crystal-like layer of ice and jingled as though made of glass "

He wanted, but was not able, to tell them how wonderfully the Thyades danced, flitting like moonlit phantoms through the moonlit storm of snow

The road became more even Tuta got into the litter again and invited Tamu to join him

"Have you learned something from the old man?" he asked

"Yes Kilik was right we may have a great treat"

"What?" Tuta asked curiously

"We may see a human victim rent to pieces and devoured Don't you believe it?"

"No"

"Why not? Men do nothing but kill and devour each other One must be either a wolf or a sheep devour others or be devoured by them It is so both in hatred and in love 'Sweet apple, I want to eat you!' boys sing to girls It is an old song, the same from the beginning of the world to love—to kill—to devour "

He spoke as though in delirium, shaking

with a silent laughter like the black sky
tremulous with the white lightning

"The first world perished in the flood and
before the end men went out of their minds,
killed and devoured each other in a fratricidal
war I believe the second world will perish in
the same way "

"Well, it won't be just yet, and meanwhile
'Sweet apple, I want to eat you,' is not a bad
song!" Tuta laughed, too

"Not bad if one could know who was going
to be eaten—she by you, or you by her "

"But, joking apart, what did the old man say?
—is there any danger of our being eaten on
the Mountain?"

"There is I am of iron, you know, and too
tough for them, but you are a sweet apple!"

"I only hope I shall fall to the share of a
pretty girl and not of an old witch!" Tuta
laughed, purring like a cat

Neither spoke any more, watching in silence
the play of summer lightnings that seemed to
wink and laugh at one another like fiery devils

IV

THE litter stopped suddenly Tamu and Tuta looked out and saw that Gingros was listening with his ear against the ground They listened, too, but heard nothing

Gingros ordered that the lights should be put out, the mules tethered, the bells taken off and the men kept quiet

"We cannot ride any farther, my lords must come with me on foot and the others wait here"

Tuta, reluctant to part with the Nubians, tried to argue, but the guide said resolutely that in that case he would not go another step

They walked on Gingros in front, holding a closed lantern so low that the light fell only on the spot where he put his foot, Tamu walked behind him and Tuta behind Tamu They went in the dark holding each other by the hand like the blind

Some three hundred paces farther they came to an overgrown path that looked like an animal's track in the grass, a network of branches showed black against the white flames of the summer lightning, the ground seemed to be covered with soft pillows—probably hillocks of moss, water squelched underfoot and there was a pungent, camphor-like smell of boggy dampness

Gingros stopped and listened again. A faint, almost imperceptible sound reached their ears, but listen as they would they could not make out what it was: it sounded like a big fly beating against the glass or the wind whistling through a keyhole. The sound died down and seemed to have never been—and in the stillness they heard only the noise of the blood in their ears.

They went on. The bog came to an end. On the slope of the hill their feet slipped on the pine-needles as upon ice, and they could feel on their faces the fragrance of the pine-forest, still warm with the heat of the day.

The black network of the branches parted and in the glare of the lightnings they saw, at their very feet, a bare wall of rock and down below a meadow closed in on one side by rocks and on the other by the pine-wood, with two clearings, probably the beds of dried-up streams, the one opposite them going up-hill and the other, on the right, going down-hill. The meadow, round as a circle for dancing, was covered with smooth green grass like a lawn, and starred with white daisies and purple harebells.

At the very foot of the rock grew a pine-tree, so tall that its branches spread over the rock like a tent.

Entering this tent, Gingros showed by the light of his lantern a plank that served as a

bridge between the rock and the pine-tree, he gave a hand to Tuta, helped him to get on to the plank and made him sit down on a thick flat branch, so curved that one could sit on it as on a chair

"Are you comfortable?" he asked

"Could not be better As in the king's tent in the arena!" Tuta answered, delighted

Tamu settled on another branch lower down, and Gingros higher up He put out the lantern and the warm and fragrant darkness of the branches enveloped them

Tuta was interested and slightly afraid, and Tammuzadad was bored as though he had known it all beforehand

"Oo—oo—oo!" sounded like the wolves' howl somewhere high up in the sky

"What is it?" Tuta asked Nobody answered him

There was in this sound something neither animal nor human and so terrible that Tuta felt a chill of fear

After the howl there was silence and then the same sound was heard again, and as it came near it grew louder and louder Wolves howled up in the sky and bulls were bellowing under the earth The howling and the bellowing merged into a roar like that of an approaching tempest

Suddenly a red glow appeared in the upper

clearing, torches sent out sparks and black shadows danced in the crimson smoke.

Trumpet-shells howled like wolves, tambourines bellowed, flutes shrieked frantically, and the heavy clatter of cymbals sounded like subterranean thunder.

Frenzied women—old, young, mere children—rushed along like a hurricane, their heads thrown back, their hair in the wind, snakes coiled into living wreaths, white foam on the lips, the faces lit up with the red glow of the torches, as though stained with blood. Decrepit grandmothers nursed new-born deer and young mothers suckled wolf-cubs.

Rushing down the glade into the meadow, they began dancing and singing, and it seemed as though the Mountain itself were dancing and singing with them.

" Whistling, howls, squeals!
From a dark storm-cloud Mother
Will wave her torch.
Voice of thunder will resound,
Like a bull the earth will roar,
Like a bull the earth will dance.
Shouting and screaming,
Throngs of women, throngs of girls,
Rush along in magic dance.
Come to us, to us, to us!
Be thou Serpent, Bull or Lion,
Show thyself, O Lord!
Appear before us in the flesh,
Come! Come! Come!"

On the circular meadow the dance curled

round and round, so lightly that the white daisies and the purple harebells barely bowed their heads, as though touched by phantom feet. The outer circle was going round like a wheel and the inner circle within stood still as its axis. The priestesses crowded together in it so closely that one could not see what they were doing, their feet were still, but their hands moved rapidly backwards and forwards as though they were combing wool.

"What are they doing?" Tuta looked, but could not make it out. Suddenly he fancied that something like a blood-stained rag was flapping in the middle of the ring, and feeling sick he shut his eyes so as not to see.

They sang in a low voice and the song sounded like a moan:

O Lord we suffer
 We suffer in love
 We hunger and thirst
 We thirst for thee!
 We may never know
 As we know not now
 Whether man or beast
 Or God we devour
 But God's mystery—love
 Be accomplished upon us!
 Tear the body with teeth
 Drink the warm flowing blood!

Suddenly the circular movement stopped and they all fell with their faces on the ground. Only one priestess, standing in the centre of the

two circles, raised her arms to the sky and cried in a loud voice:

“Come! Come! Come!”

And such joy was in her face that she seemed already to see Him whom she called.

“Who is she? Who is she?” Tamu looked—and the lover recognised, and yet did not recognise, his beloved. “She is possessed! A girl is made mad by God as a heifer by a gadfly.... Well, do you love such a one?” he asked himself with hope, and answered with despair: “I love her.”

He moved slowly, rustling the branches like a bear that makes for the honey in the crevice of a tree. Hearing Gingros’s frightened whisper overhead, he merely smiled and rudely pushed away Tuta’s cattish paw that clung to him. He found a strong branch with his feet, and holding on with his hands to the upper one—the one on which he had been sitting—he stood up, took one step, then another, parted the branches and peeped out. The bear was going for the honey and was not afraid of the bees.

Had she seen him? No, she was looking higher, at the sky. But when she lowered her eyes she would see him. She did lower them—and yet she did not see, like a night-bird in the daylight.

He took another step, parted the branches still farther and stepped out into the full

glare of the torches "Look, look, you blind owl!"

She saw him Her face was lit up by anger, as at that time under the cliff, by the sea, when the spear of Britomartis, the Huntress, whistled over his head

She raised her wand He waited, his heart fluttering with hope she would throw her wand at him, point to him with her finger, cry "A beast!" and set the Thyades upon him as a huntress lets loose a pack of furious hounds at the prey "Tear it, devour it!"

But their eyes met and he understood that once more she would have pity—forgive Oh, he would rather she burnt out his eyes with a red-hot ember than with this look of forgiveness!

She lowered her hand and touched with her wand the girl who lay at her feet "Ah, the little bitch!" Tamu recognised Eoia when she raised her head "You at least help me, cry out, cry out so that they all hear!"

Eoia would have cried out, but Dio's hand closed her mouth

No one, except them, had seen him as yet all were still lying with their faces on the ground, without moving, they knew that God was there and to see Him was to die

Dio turned her back on Tamu and, pointing in the opposite direction, cried

"Io Adun! Follow me, sisters!"

All jumped up with an answering cry
“Io, Io Adun!”
And they rushed off in the direction that her
wand pointed, down the lower glade

V

BEFORE Tamu had had time to recover, the meadow was empty, the lights were out and the dark night enveloped him again, only the white summer lightnings flashed in the sky, winking and laughing at one another like fiery devils

“Klik told us a lie, the scoundrel, we have not enjoyed ourselves,” he thought, with a laugh “Gingros, the old goat, lies, too, about the god being on the Mountain there is no one here, neither God nor devil”

“There is someone here! There is! Here, here, here!” he suddenly heard ringing and ticking in his very ear—like the ticking of the death-beetle in the dry wood of old houses during sleepless nights

“It must be the blood in my ears,” he thought, and called, “Hey, Gingros! Tutankhamon! Are you here?”

No one answered him and again he heard the ticking and ringing

“Here, here, here! There is someone here!
There is!”

"Who is here?" he cried, and listened as though waiting for an answer.

But the sound died down, there was a dead stillness, and suddenly such misery came over him that he thought, "I would like to make a noose out of my belt and hang myself—here—here, here—on this very branch!"

He took hold of the branch with both hands, climbed on to it, jumped on to the rock, rolled down the hill on the slippery pine-needles, nearly stuck in the marsh, wandered about for some time, jumping from hillock to hillock, making his way among the thickets in the dark and rustling the dry branches like a running animal, he came at last to the edge of the wood, saw a light in the distance where the Nubians were waiting with the litter and walked towards it.

Suddenly something enormous, white above and black below—huge and shaggy, like a bear running on its hind-legs—rushed out of the forest. This was what he thought at first, but looking carefully he saw, by the light of the lightning, that it was Gingros with Tuta on his back. The white part was Tuta's linen dress, and the black Gingros's goat-skin. He was running, galloping as fast as he could, while Tuta, clutching at him with hands and feet, spurred him on with words and blows, as a furious driver spurs a horse.

"Quick! Quick! Quick! They are after us, do you hear? Merciful Mother Isis, Father Amon-Aton, have mercy upon us!"

The small thin Egyptian seemed to Gingros no heavier than a kitten, but, half-stifled, he snorted under him like an overriden horse And the future king of Egypt sat on him more dead than alive He fancied that whole armies of she-devils were at his heels they might catch, rend and devour him at any moment

"Stop! Wait! Don't be afraid! It is I, Tam-muzadad!" Tamu shouted after them, but Gingros, hearing a shout behind him, ran all the faster

Only by the bonfire of the Nubians did Tamu overtake them

"Ah, merchant!" Tuta brought out, staring at him with amazement "And I thought you were "

"You thought I was eaten?" Tamu asked, and burst out laughing as though he had enjoyed himself after all

In a wild forest ravine, where a deep layer of moss stretched like a soft bed between the roots of mighty oaks, the Thyades came to a stop

"We shall spend the night here, sisters Build tents, light bonfires!" said Dio, and when they scattered about the forest to fetch

branches for the tents and dry sticks, she made her way, unseen by them, into a wild thicket where no one could find her, fell with her face in the grass and buried her head in it, hiding as a dying animal hides in its lair

"Tamu, my brother, what have you done?" she whispered, as she had done that time under the cliff by the sea

She remembered the mocking smile with which he met her eyes as he stood on the tree "He whom you are calling will never come, and if He did, woe to the living! for it is the devil and not God!"—this was what that smile said "You are a devil yourself, you decide!" she wanted to answer, but she could not "Have you forgotten your brother Iolus?" sounded like a moan in her ears She remembered how in the cave of Mount Dicte, where the Cross is, and the altar for human sacrifice, Mother Akakalla asked her, "Can't you forgive?" Tamu had answered for her Tamu had risen up for Iolus, brother for brother

And she remembered that when fathers and mothers carry their children to the altar of sacrifice they tie them up in a bag, like kids or lambs, so as not to see their faces and not to pity them Her brother Iolus too struggled in such a bag, and after the victim had been slain, the mother, mad with grief, started a song

THE BACCHANTE

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Is it my own child
Crying in death anguish?
No it's only a lamb
Bleating in the bag

And as though in answer another song
sounded in Dio's ears

But God's mystery—love
Be accomplished upon us!
Tear the body with teeth
Drink the warm flowing blood

Are her hands sticky with blood? Is it the
taste of blood on her lips? She jumped up,
wanting to run away, but her legs gave way
under her and she fell down with a low moan
Everything seemed to go round before her
eyes, a blood-coloured mist rose up, and in it,
white and dazzling as the sun, flamed a fiery
Cross

THE MINOTAURUS

THE MINOTAURUS

I



UMAN sacrifice is demanded by God," thought the Cretans, as they listened to the roar of subterranean thunder, that had been heard oftener and oftener of late

The earth was not trembling yet, but it might begin to quake and dance like a mad bull any day "Sacrifice, sacrifice!" the god-Bull, the Minotaurus, was bellowing under the ground like a hungry bull

The games of bulls were being held in the Knossos arena. There were many wounded, but not one killed. People knew that to interfere in the duel between god and man, to hasten the victim's death, was forbidden by the sacred law of the games. The god must select and slay the victim himself, but the greedy lust of murder was already stirring in their hearts.

"There, look! the grey one is just going to gore her! Now, dear little grey Mouse, do strike!" Eranna, daughter of Thraïsona and wife of one of the chief dignitaries of Crete, was saying to Tuta, her neighbour in the king's

tent Tuta had surreptitiously left his place of honour among the king's eunuchs and was sitting next to her

"O—oh! he has missed her, he has missed her again!" Eranna groaned with unsatisfied lust, as though with pain "Stupid, heavy creature, clumsy bear! Had his left horn been a bit higher it would have ripped her stomach like a knife!"

Through the opalescent rosiness of paint and subtle ointments—"eternal youth," another marvel devised by the cunning Daedals—fine wrinkles could be seen all over her face, especially near the lips, so brightly painted that they seemed stained with blood, her rivals jeeringly called these wrinkles "crevices in a white-washed wall" An aristocrat to her finger-tips, stately, affected and false, chaste and cold as ice in appearance, but secretly depraved in reality, Eranna seemed charming to Tuta

Sitting next to her he whispered compliments in her ear, peering greedily into the opening of her gorgeous dress, green shot with blue—the colour of sea-water—and embroidered in gold and silver with fine seaweed, curling shells and flying-fishes As with all Cretan women the dress was open down to the waist, leaving the nipples bare Tuta was accustomed to the innocent nakedness of the Egyptians, but this was different

Oh, these two apples—"Sweet apple, I want to eat you!"—the breasts of a woman of forty as fresh and young as those of a girl of sixteen, with pointed, rosy-brown nipples also touched up with paint and with a spot of rouge at the very end—a drop of blood on the point of a knife!

"To preserve the shape of their breasts they destroy the unborn child" Tuta remembered another cunning invention of the cunning Daedals

Seeing that her longing was not to be satisfied for some time, Eranna turned away from the arena with boredom, she noticed Tuta's greedy looks, heard his passionate whisper and smiled

"What are you whispering?"

"A song"

"What song?"

"I will tell you Listen"

They spoke Egyptian, the language was fashionable at the Cretan court and she knew it very well

Tuta drew nearer still and whispered in her ear

'Were I the black slave who tends to her
I should behold my sister's nakedness
Were I the slave who has to wash her clothes
I should inhale the perfume of her body
Were I a ring on my beloved's finger
For ever would she wear and cherish me
Were I a myrtle branch upon her bosom
I'd shower kisses on my sister's breasts!

"Do you like the song?" he asked

"It isn't bad"

"I know another still better"

"Well, tell me"

He whispered again

Oh my brother my king my god
 How lovely to go with you to the river
 To the half opened lotos flowers!
 How sweet it is to bathe with you
 To let you see my nakedness
 Through the fine transparent linen
 Laden with sweet smelling myrrh!

And, bending over her bosom, he breathed the perfume of musk and myrrh, the disturbing scent of the tuberose and of something else sweet and terrible—of a woman's body and corruption, it seemed to him "You will all be swallowed up in the abyss one day," came into his mind as he sniffed the evil fragrance

"What scent does my sister use?" he inquired

"Haven't you got it in Egypt? They say the whole of Memphis is like a jar of perfume"

"But there is none like this one!" he whispered "It is as intoxicating as you are"

He nearly said "perverted"—and perhaps she would not have been offended if he had

"Thank you for the compliment!" Eranna laughed "And my lord likes intoxication? I know why he went to the Mountain, whom he was spying on," and she shook her finger at him

"I wonder if she knows how I galloped on Gingros's shoulders?" thought Tuta, in confusion, and changed the subject

"There is a mural painting in our temples in Egypt the goddess of love, Isis-Hathor, suckling a king, a handsome youth, he clings to the divine nipples like a baby to its mother's breast"

"Well, what of it?" she asked, with a sly smile

"My sister's breast is like the breast of the goddess of love "

"Well, what of it?" she repeated, smiling still more slyly

Without speaking he looked sideways at the opening of her dress as a cat looks at cream

"Queer people you are, you Egyptians!" laughed Eranna

"Why queer?"

"You have so much foresight you build your tombs—eternal dwellings—while you are still alive, and put all sorts of things there so that you should not be bored in the next world books with love-stories and such pictures that they can't be mentioned That's true, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is"

"Will you put some in, too?"

"I shall do as everybody else does"

"And would you like me to give you some

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of my perfume? You will put it into your coffin and think of me in the next world Do you know what it is called?"

"What?"

She whispered something so indecent in his ear that he would have blushed had a worshipper of the goddess Hathor been capable of blushing at anything

She turned to her black slave, a girl of thirteen, who was holding over her a fan-sunshade with a woven pattern of circular rays, narrowing towards the middle, dull brown on a background of gold, like a huge fading sunflower. The sunshade came down and screened them both. Eranna looked straight into Tuta's eyes, and suddenly, as though ashamed, looked down at the opening of her dress.

Tuta understood—he bent down quickly and clung to her breast like the youthful king to the nipples of the goddess Hathor.

"What are you doing? We shall be seen!" Eranna laughed, but did not resist him.

The black slave smiled at them with the innocent shamelessness of a beast, and they were no more ashamed before her than men are ashamed before animals.

Tuta felt on his tongue the sickly taste of carmine he had inadvertently licked off the crimson point—the drop of blood on the point of the knife.

The moment of bliss was brief he had no sooner let go of the "sweet apple" than the sunshade was lifted again

"You haven't forgotten what I asked you?" Eranna asked in a calm and business-like voice

She had asked him about her lover, a boxer in the Knossos arena, who wanted to go to Egypt to join the king's bodyguard there

"My lady's word is law, everything has been already done," Tuta answered

At a sign from Eranna the sunshade came down once more, and the baby clung to the mother's breast

Tuta liked this—it was honest, no trickery he paid and received the goods

"Look, look," she said "It's the Foam, the white one, Pasiphae's lover! But what is the matter with him to-day? He is jumping about in a fury! Oh, how dreadful, how divine! Glory be to Adun—now the thing begins in earnest!"

"And who is the dancer?" asked Tuta, not seeing very well

"Don't you see? The bride of the god-Bull herself, Pasiphae—Eoia!"

II

Eoia had come to the town on the eve of the games to see the merchant from Byblos, who had a letter for her from Itobal written just before his death.

When she read that her father had forgiven and blessed her before he died, a terrible weight was lifted off her shoulders. She was so happy that she wanted to dance, and she thought "It is a good thing the games are to-day—I shall dance as I have never danced before!"

She had heard about the games on the same day, a few hours before they were to begin. She would have had time to send word to Dio, who was in her secluded house by the harbour, but she did not want to, knowing that it would have been too hard for Dio just then to appear in the crowd and dance. Eoia had guessed with what a heavy heart Dio came back from the Mountain; she remembered the smile with which that shameless, godless devil, Tamu, looked from the tree on the dance of the Thyades.

In the town she heard that three days before, when the games that were cancelled on account of the king's illness were to have been held, one of the attendants was found trying to give intoxicating drink to Foam. The man was executed on the spot—in accordance with the

law of the games he was hanged like a dog on the first rope that came handy to make the god-Bull drunk was a terrible crime He had had time before he died to mention the name of Kinir, son of Uamar, his accomplice But no one believed him Kinir was too venerable an old man to take part in such a crime

"It is that devil Tamu who is seeking my life," Eoia thought, when she heard Kinir's name "But I don't suppose they will give it up so easily they did not succeed the first time, they may succeed the second I ought to have a look at Foam,"—the thought flashed through her mind But she forgot about it with strange thoughtlessness "This is a lucky day all will be well I shall dance as I have never danced before!"

She ran out into the arena The bull was standing there alone all the other bulls had been driven away and all the dancers had gone

Seeing Eoia, he approached her slowly, raising the dust with his hoofs and bellowing dully from time to time, his horns set She waited for him without moving and merely sought to catch his eye, knowing that the human gaze was essential for subduing an animal

She did catch his eye, but it was strange, dim, as though veiled by a mist of death It was not he but somebody else that looked at her out of his eye

He was always ferocious, but only, as it were, on purpose, for the sake of the audience, while in reality he danced in time and in tune with her to the rhythmical music of the flutes. But now he advanced stupidly, clumsily, staggering as though he were drunk.

When he went right up to her he made a furious dash at her. She darted up like a swallow, flew over his horns on to his back and lay down, resting her head between his horns. He raised his nose and breathed the drunken fumes upon her. She was not frightened. "Never mind if he is drunk—I shall subdue him all the same. All will be well. I shall dance as I have never danced before!" She repeated this like an incantation.

The bull rose on his hind-legs as though wanting to fall on his back and crush her with his weight. But she had already jumped off him, and before he had time to turn she stood at the other end of the arena.

Glancing at the crowd, she suddenly saw in front of her Kinir and Tamu, on the bench of honour next to the king's tent. "Ah, you are caught, you little bitch! You won't get out of this now, it's the end!" she read in the eyes of both. But she was not frightened. "All will be well, I shall dance as I have never . . ."

Sharp as the point of a knife the end of a horn grazed her shoulder. The bull had run up to her

from behind while she was looking at Kinir and Tamu. She would have had time to jump back had the animal's movement been intentional, but again he had rushed at her stupidly, staggering as though he were drunk, and caught her accidentally.

The point of the horn merely grazed her shoulder, tearing the skin, but a fine streak of blood was already trickling down her body.

Seeing blood the crowd yelled frantically,

"Slay her! Slay her! Slay her!"

They were praying to the god-Bull to slay the victim.

King Idomin thrust out his bull face—the mask—from out the curtains of the tent, waved a blood-red rag, and the flutes played the song of the sacrificial slaying of victims.

"Slay her!" Eranna yelled with the crowd.

"If Eoia is killed, Dio will die, too," thought Tuta getting up.

"Where are you going?" Eranna asked.

"To the king."

"What for?"

"To ask him to spare Eoia."

"Don't sit still, I won't let you go," she said, seizing him by the hand and almost rudely forcing him to sit down by her side again. "Aren't you happy here?"

The sunshade was lowered, and, overpowered by the intoxicating fragrance of a woman's

body—the smell of corruption—Tuta clung to the breast of the goddess Hathor “It is vile, it is vile!” he thought, “but the viler it is, the sweeter”

Eoia danced as she had never done before Blood trickled from her shoulder, but, not feeling the pain, she kept flying over the bull as lightly as a swallow

The day was passing into sultry twilight
The sky, dimly white, seemed low as a ceiling
It was close as in a bath-house and, in the heat,
two beasts—the crowd and the bull—were
breathless with the same lust for blood

Eoia remembered how one day, in a deserted suburb of Byblos, she was attacked at dusk by a drunken vagrant, who wanted to dishonour her She escaped then, but she would not escape now Two drunken beasts, the crowd and the bull, were pursuing her with the same lust—to dishonour, to kill her

And she remembered, too, how little children sacrificed to Moloch struggled in the bag, she too was struggling in a bag now

She suddenly felt sorry for herself, and, together with pity, fear pricked her heart

The bull was again coming towards her, as he had done times without number, and it seemed to her he would go on doing it for ever She knew that if she did not jump back he would toss her on to his horns But she could

not move her arms and legs seemed paralysed as in a nightmare and a deadly heaviness possessed her

"Mothei, help me!" she moaned, raising her eyes to heaven

Before sunset the white sky was stained with red blood, as though there too a victim were being slain Eoia closed her eyes

The tambourines made a dull roar, the flutes gave a piercing squeal and the choir sang

Rejoice O Virgin pure,
 Prepare the marriage bed!
 The wrath of heavenly anger
 Averted be by love!
 Flow from the white belly
 Crimson crimson blood!
 The loins of the heavenly Heifer
 The Bull will cover in love
 With a triumphal song
 We glorify thee now
 O thou God's elected
 Slain for God's own sake
 Mysterious Virgin Mother!

Eianna, pale as death—a flower of the tuberose fragrant with the smell of a woman's body, the smell of corruption—sank on to Tuta's shoulder

"Look, look, look! He is just going to " she brought out in a breathless whisper

The sunshade was lifted and Tuta saw that a blood-stained rag was flapping between the horns of the bull, as on that night in the hands

of the Thyades on the Mountain And in the bellowing of the bull he heard the roar of the subterranean thunder

“You will all sink into the abyss one day!”

III

“To Egypt! To Egypt!” Dio repeated, looking from the flat roof of her house at a ship going out to sea

Red-breasted, black on both sides, curved sharply like a dolphin’s back, with two azure eyes in the prow to see its way at sea, it was sailing out of Knossos harbour The sail hung down, for there was no wind, but twenty pairs of oars rose and fell with one accord, wet and sparkling like the fins of a sea-monster, and the ship moved rapidly, dragging after it two bluish folds in the whiteness of the sea, almost as dim and opalescent as the sky

She did not know where it was going, but it seemed to her that all ships were going to Egypt And stretching her arms after it she repeated

“To Egypt! To Egypt!”

She remembered an ancient Babylonian psalm “My heart is sore pained within me and the terrors of death are fallen upon me Who shall give me the wings of a dove? Then would I fly away and be at rest wander far off and remain in the wilderness”

She remembered, too, King Utux-Odysseus,
the eternal wanderer

But I needs must forth to the sea and for Egypt be spreading
the sail

On the seventh day went we aboard and we sailed from
Crete land wide

And the fresh North wind blew fair and merrily swept us on
On the fifth day came we to where fair Egypt's river flowed¹

Zenra, her foster-mother, used to sing to her Egyptian lullabies, her father, Aridoel, told her about the wonders of Egypt—his ships often went there, laden with Cretan wood and purple dye From childhood that alien country had seemed her own, as though she had lived there immemorably long ago and wanted to go back there, longing for it as for her native land When she looked at the flocks of cranes flying south in the autumn, she stretched her arms after them as she did after the ship just now

"To Egypt! To Egypt!"

And now, assailed by deadly terrors, she knew that she must escape from them to Egypt, and that the greatest of the sons of men, Akhnaton, king of Egypt, would alone be able to save her

A little old woman, wrinkled like a wizened apple and wearing a huge black wig that made her look like a mushroom, came up to the roof by the outer staircase

¹ *The Odyssey of Homer* in English verse by Arthur S Way

"Ah, Zenra, at last!" Dio exclaimed "Where could you have been all this time?"

"I have been running about on your business I have tired myself out looking for Tuta all over the town"

The old woman gave her a letter with Tuta's seal—the sun disk of Aton

"And where is Eoia?" Dio asked

"In town"

"What for?"

"She wants to see once more the merchant from Byblos and question him about her father"

"Is he dead?"

"Yes"

"Did he not forgive her?"

"Yes, thank God, he did. She was so delighted, poor girl, I cannot tell you"

"Why have you left her alone in the town?"

"She won't get lost, she is not a child! She will come back to-morrow morning"

"And when did you come back?"

"This morning at dawn"

"Where have you been all the day, then?"

"In the harbour I was looking over the ship in which we shall sail to Egypt. Ah, it's a fine ship! The masts are of cedar-wood, the sails are of linen, the cabins are gilded, there are a hundred oarsmen—all picked men. We shall be leaving in ten days, and if the wind is in the

right quarter, in another five we shall be in Egypt”

Suddenly she clapped her hands, moved her head to and fro so that the stiff plaits that had once been black, but had long ago turned rusty, fell about her face, the wig slid to one side showing her white hair, and in a tiny voice, like a gnat buzzing, she began to sing

Crocodile, crocodile
Hide yourself in the black slime!
With the Sun God I rise up
Unafraid of crocodile
Paparuka—paparaka!
Paparuka—papara! ’

These magic words came at the end of the song familiar to Dio from babyhood, to the sound of it she and her little brother Iolus used to play with a wooden crocodile that could open its mouth—an Egyptian toy their father had given them. And after the three terrible deaths—Aridoel’s, Iolus’s, Ephra’s—old Zenra took to drink from grief, and when tipsy always sang this crocodile song

“And you got drunk on the ship?” Dio asked
“Drunk indeed! As though I were a drunkard!
I just had a sip. My fellow-countrymen on the ship treated me to some real Amon’s beer. Don’t you remember what day it is to-day? So I had a drink to the memory of our dear ones”

Dio remembered that it was the anniversary

of her father's death, and together with Aridoel, the old woman commemorated the two others—Iolus and Ephra

"Well, all right, nurse, you go and rest," she said kindly, without any reproach

And as Zenra was going down the stairs she called after her

"Nurse, and when are the games to be?"

The old woman did not hear—she was a little deaf Dio went to the top of the staircase, bent down and cried

"The games! When are the games to be?"

"The games?" Zenra answered "No, I haven't heard anything about the games God willing, we shall go away before Seth the devil take them! It is not games but regular slaughter"

The sultry day was changing into dusk The sky, dimly white, seemed low as a ceiling Suddenly, before sunset, the white sky was stained with blood as though there, in the sky, a victim were being slain

Eoia's dancing-shoes of white shiny leather were standing on the roof the soles were rubbed with a special resinous paste so that they should not slip on the smooth hide of the bulls' backs Before going to town, Eoia washed and whitened them and put them in the sun to dry

Dio glanced at them and thought, "Yes, it would be a good thing to go away before the games" And suddenly something dark and

rapid, like the shadow of a cloud, passed over her heart

She opened Tuta's letter, read it, and her heart throbbed with joy "In ten days I shall be going to Egypt!"

She went down the wooden staircase alongside the outer wall of the house Built of roughly-hewn stone, clay and logs, the three-storied house, tall, narrow and with few windows, looked like the tower of a fortress

The houses in Crete were built without fireplaces, braziers with burning charcoal that filled the place with fumes were a poor substitute for hearths But Aridoel, being a merchant, often went on business to Mycenae, Tyrinth, Argos and other towns of the mainland, where the men of the North built warm houses with fireplaces he liked the comfort of them and built a similar house for himself in Crete

Dio came into the large lower room, roofed in separately, with a hearth, four wooden pillars and a round hole for the smoke in the grimy ceiling Chink-like windows, with lattice-work oaken frames, were covered with a transparent membrane made of bull's bladder and brightly painted, so that the daylight coming through it seemed rainbow-coloured On one of the walls there was a painting a naked youth looking like a girl, with a body of bluish silver like the moonbeams, was running in the sacred

garden and bending down to pick saffron-flowers curled like tongues of flame

On the shelves in the corner was the library rolls of palm-leaves covered with Cretan writing, clay tablets with wedge-shaped Babylonian characters, Egyptian papyri with hieroglyphics on them

One door led into the garden, another to the bathroom, which had the water laid on, a third and a fourth to Dio's and Eoia's bedrooms

In the recess of the inner wall was a tiny chapel, with a hanging bronze chandelier—a fiery wreath of lamps that were always burning—and a painted clay bas-relief picturing a vision of the Mother upon a hill sharp as a pine-cone stood a little girl in a pleated bell-shaped skirt, her bosom bare and a wand in her outstretched hand—the Great Mother, at her feet, on either side of the hill, two enormous lionesses were standing on their hind-legs, and in front of her a man was covering his face from her as from the sun

Dio too covered her face with her hands, knelt down and whispered a prayer

As in her childhood, when she used to pray for fine weather or a new toy, knowing for certain that her prayer would be answered, so it was now She no longer thought whether God was torturing man or being tortured in him it all suddenly ceased to have importance

or terror for her, just like the pitiful smile of Tamu, the devil

She kept repeating two words only
“Mother, help!”

And then there were no more words, only the sound, the cry of the child to its mother

“Ma—ma—ma!”

And the prayer was answered some strong arms picked her up as a mother’s arms pick up a child For the first time after the Mountain she wept

A bronze statuette—a mummy of Osiris with the face of King Akhnaton—also stood in the chapel Dio took it in her hands, kissed it and gazed into its face with the same feeling as always—as though recognising a brother “Who is he? Who is he? I shall soon know,” she thought joyfully

She went out of the house into the garden, walked along an overgrown path between two black walls of giant cypresses to the farthest end of the garden, where there was a small round lake with a round island upon it There, in the black shadow of the cypresses, an alabaster tomb gleamed white A weeping-willow wept over it, a spring dropped tears out of a moss-grown stone, the air was fragrant with the smell of the narcissus, the flower of death

Three were resting in the tomb—Aridoel, Ephra, Iolus

Dio went over the bridge to the island, blew up the embers on the tripod and put some perfume upon them. The smoke rose straight in the still air and the flame lit up two paintings on the walls of the tomb.

On one of them, in the primordial abyss of waters, the divine Octopus was opening its belly—the womb of the birth-giving Mother—and the creatures born from it seethed and multiplied in the primeval slime, the slime changed into a seaweed, the seaweed changed into a living creature, the sea-creature changed into an earthly one—the fish became the bird, the shell—a butterfly, the sea-urchin—a hedgehog, but as yet without feet, the sea-horse—a real horse, but standing on its hind-legs not yet freed from the slime. Thus the endless chain of growth and development unfolded itself, link after link, creature after creature.

And on the other painting was represented the last link—Man rising from the dead; he was coming out of the depths of the earth, his tomb, like a child from the womb of its mother.

Thus upon the two paintings two mysteries were joined in one—the beginning of the world and its end, creation and resurrection.

"Adun is risen from the dead, rejoice!" Dio whispered the prayer with gentle ecstasy.

"Tamu, my brother—which miracle is greater, to create or to raise from the dead?" She smiled.

as though in answer to the smile of Tamu,
the devil

She returned home, lay down and went to sleep so sweetly, as she had not slept for many a night

IV

SHE woke up, not because she heard a sound, but because she knew there was just going to be a sound—and indeed there was the creak of the door

Zenra came in, holding a lamp in one hand and with the other screening the light from Dio She stopped in the doorway and then approached slowly, stealthily The palm with which she was screening the flame trembled so violently that shadows danced over the walls and the ceiling Her grey hair was dishevelled, her eyes glowed, her lips moved without a sound

“What is the matter with her? Is she drunk? Has she gone mad?” Dio thought, and suddenly remembered that Zenra looked like this on the day when Ephra strangled herself

“What is it, nurse?” she cried, sitting up in bed

“It’s nothing, darling! It’s nothing! Don’t be afraid! God will help us! Get up, dress, let us go!”

"Where? What for?"

Dio jumped up, and kneeling in bed thrust forward her arms with such horror and disgust as though death itself were approaching her

The old woman came nearer, slowly, stealthily, silently, again her lips moved without sound

"To Eoia! Let us go to Eoia!" she moaned faintly at last

But, strange to say, this did not seem unexpected to Dio just as she had known when she woke up that there was going to be a sound, so now she knew all that was going to happen, it seemed as though she were merely recalling what had already been and not learning anything new, all this had happened before, so it was—so it is now

Without speaking, Zenra came up to the bed and fell upon her knees Dio seized her with both hands by the shoulders, so tightly that she tore with her nails Zenra's linen shift

"Speak, I tell you, speak!"

Zenra fell on the floor, and beating her head against the foot of the bed wailed

"The bull! The bull! The bull!"

"Killed her?" Dio asked, though she already knew—she remembered "Where is she?"

"Killed! Killed! Killed!" Zenra wailed

"Where is she?"

"Here, by the gates "

Dio jumped off the bed threw a deer-skin

over her shoulders, the golden-yellow veil with silver bees over her head, and ran out of the house into the garden

She ran along the same path as in the evening, between two black walls of giant cypresses, past the little lake with the island where the tomb of the three gleamed white

She stumbled against the root of a tree and nearly fell down There was a darkness before her eyes, the ground under her swayed to and fro like the deck of a ship But by an effort of will she mastered the approaching darkness of unconsciousness

She heard the weeping of the funeral-flutes And again—all this had happened before so it was—so it is now

She ran as far as the gate, opened it and came out on to the high-road from the harbour into the town The funeral-procession stopped here The priestesses of the God-Bull held on their shoulders the funeral-litter with the corpse Funereal torches flamed, fragrant incense rose from the censers, the flutes and the choir wailed

‘Rejoice O Virgin pure,
Prepare the marriage bed!’

The mistress of Adun’s games, Mother Anahita, a venerable old woman, with an intelligent and kind face, came up to Dio and said in the tone of prayer

"Rejoice, Dio, priestess of the Great Mother! God has accepted the victim prepared by thee, that the earth may be purified with her pure blood and the Kingdom of the Seas may be saved! Glory be to the Father, Son and Mother!"

And embracing her, with tears, she added simply and quietly

"My daughter, my darling, I would give my soul to soothe your pain! Remember one thing great is your sorrow, but great also is your reward, great priestess of the Mother, Akakalla's successor Would you like to say good-bye?"

Dio bent her head without speaking At a sign from Anahita, the priestesses placed the funeral-litter on the ground and removed from it the purple cover embroidered in gold with Labrae between bulls' horns

The dead girl was dressed in white and wore a wreath of saffron-flowers, as she had done when Dio dressed her to be the bride of the Bull, Pasiphae the Light-giving Tightly bound with the death-bandages, wrapped up like a mummy to give a human shape to her mutilated body, she resembled a doll

Dio knelt down and lifted the veil off Eoia's face There was a little black spot on the left temple, a red bruise encircled the forehead—a red wreath under the white one But the childish face with the childish freckles round the eyes was

almost unspoiled, radiant with an unearthly light,
pure with an unearthly purity

Dio looked at her with a heart-rending agony
of pity, but could not weep tears dried on her
heart like water on a burning-hot stone With a
low moan she fastened her lips on the cold lips
of the dead Oh, if only she could die like this!

Someone took her by the arms and was going
to lift her, but she got up She saw that people
were looking at her and felt shy, the shadow of
a guilty smile flitted across her face that looked
more dead than the face of the dead She rapidly
lowered the veil, and when the procession moved
on she followed it with a firm step

V

THE sun was rising when they came to a wall
built of such enormous stones that they seemed
to have been piled up by a superhuman power—
the Mother's holy enclosure In the wall was a
low gate, crowned by a triangular stone as big
as a rock upon which two lionesses, the same
as in Dio's chapel, were standing on their hind-
legs, between them was a stone pillar, the most
ancient symbol of the Mother—the root and
foundation of all things, the Mother Mountain
uniting the sky with the earth

Passing through the gates they climbed up

the steps hewn in the rock to a high hill that stood out far into the sea—a headland of the Kaeratos Mountains

The morning was clear The mist of the evening had dispersed In the west, above the misty ranges of bluish hills, rose snow-clad Ida, rosy white, virginally pure, like the immaculate Virgin-Mother Herself In the north the wind-swept misty sea, glowing with a purple glow, was wreathed as it were in the white smoke of the foaming waves And down below, in the great plain of Knossos, in the dark-green ring of cypress-groves, white as fresh-fallen snow or linen spread out to bleach in the fields, gleamed the city-palace of white stone, the dwelling of the god-Bull—the Labyrinth

On the flat top of the hill a wide and low altar for human sacrifice was built of roughly-hewn stones A pyre was made above it, and there Eoia's body was placed

Dio shuddered and drew back when Mother Anahita gave her the torch But she took it, and was the first to light the funeral-pyre

The flutes wailed, the choir sang

"Rejoice O Virgin pure,
Prepare the marriage bed!
The wrath of heavenly anger
Averted be by love!
To the couch of his Bride divine
The God comes down in love
With a triumphal song

THE MINOTAURUS

179

We glorify thee now
O thou God's elected
Slain for God's own sake
Mysterious Virgin Mother!

The pyre flared up, and in the surging flames
the dead doll suddenly moved as though she
were alive. Dio closed her eyes so as not to see,
and when she opened them again everything
had disappeared in the fire.

"God has accepted the victim prepared by
you." She recalled Anahita's words, and thought,
"Yes, her blood is upon me. It is I who killed
her!"

And as on that night on the Mountain
everything went round before her eyes, a
blood-coloured mist rose up, and in it, white
and dazzling as the sun, flamed a fiery Cross.

THE CROSS

THE CROSS

I



OMING home, Dio lay down on a couch in the hearth-chamber, turned her face to the wall, covered her head, and remained so all day long Zenia came in on tiptoe from time to time to listen whether she was crying, but no, she lay quite still, like one dead

Late in the evening she came in again and saw that Dio was lying on her back, her eyes were open, but unseeing like the eyes of the blind, her lips were tightly shut, her face seemed turned to stone, she was breathing rapidly, "like a fish on the sand," thought Zenra She called, and receiving no answer burst into tears

Slowly and with difficulty Dio turned her blind eyes towards her, unsealed her lips with an effort and said

"Go away!"

"Oh, dear heart, don't drive me away! Where am I to go if I am to leave you? Let us weep together, you will feel better then," Zenra faltered

Dio looked at her with unseeing eyes and repeated

"Go away!"

Shrinking together like a dog that has been beaten, the old woman went out of the room without a word

In the night Dio got up and wandered about the house. She peeped into the chapel, saw the statue of the Mother, remembered how she prayed that day "Mother, help!" and thought "Fine help she has given me!"

Suddenly she found herself by the wall. She stood beating her head against it without understanding what she was doing, at last she understood everything in the world was as deaf as this wall—you might knock as much as you liked, no one would answer.

She came into Eoia's bedroom, opened her clothes-box, took out one dress after another, they still smelt of the living Eoia, as though, having left the body, the soul remained in the clothes.

At the very bottom of the box she saw two small white shoes—those that were on the roof the day before, Zenra must have put them away so that she should not see them. A spasm of weeping gripped her throat, but she could not weep tears dried on her heart like water on a burning-hot stone.

Coming back to her old place she lay down

again and breathed rapidly, like a fish on the sand Sometimes she lost consciousness for a moment, but she could not go to sleep as soon as she sank into sleep she woke up again with a sudden start

When she closed her eyes she saw childish freckles round the dead eyes, she saw the dead doll moving in the swaying flames as though it were alive, she saw the white clouds of smoke turning rosy in the rays of the rising sun like pale phantoms filling with warm blood, and the dancer dancing and twirling light-footed in the light smoke "I shall dance as I have never danced before!" And Zenia kept coming into the room, approaching her like death, moving her lips and murmuring, "Come to Eoia, to Eoia!"

The night was endless, and yet when the round opening above the hearth turned grey she was surprised it had only just been evening, and here it was daylight again She was sorry the night had gone—she felt easier in darkness, the daylight seemed to hurt not only her eyes but her whole body

The nurse began cooking something on the hearth Dio silently motioned her to stop The old woman went out into the yard and continued cooking on the brazier She brought in some baked vegetable-marrow porridge and wheaten dough-cakes—her mistress's favourite dishes

Dio had not eaten anything for nearly two days and had only drunk water the very thought of food made her sick Once more she motioned to Zenra to take away the dishes

The old woman did not even cry, but gave her such a look that Dio had pity on her and said

“Give me some milk”

Zenra brought a jug of milk and poured some out in a cup Dio took a sip, and seeing that Zenra held a piece of bread in her hand, not daring to offer it to her, took it herself, broke off a piece, put it in her mouth, chewed it, and, unable to swallow, put it out

She lay down again, turning to the wall and covering her head

The day was as endless as the night and vanished as instantly, the sunlight had just been falling in rainbow-coloured patches through the painted window and now again the lamps were aglow in the chapel Again she wandered about at night unable to rest and quietly beat her head against the wall

Three days passed in this way She still ate nothing She was beginning to lose her strength Her head reeled slightly with weakness, soft waves seemed to be gently rocking her, carrying her away Would they rock her to death? No, she knew she would not die before she had done something “What is it I must do?” she repeated

in anguish, as though she had forgotten it, tried to remember and could not

Mother Anahita called, spoke intelligently and kindly, but Dio did not understand words did not enter into her heart any more than the bread did into her throat She only understood that Mother Akakalla was very ill and might soon die and then she, Dio, was to be the great priestess "You are a wet hen and not a great priestess!" she recalled, and the shadow of a smile flitted, deathlike, across her deathlike face

Tuta called also He spoke of having soon to go to Egypt and asked if she would be able to go with him

"I don't know, perhaps I shall," she answered, so indifferently that she was herself surprised, she remembered stretching out her arms the other day after a ship that was putting out to sea, now there was no reason to go to Egypt

When Tuta mentioned Akhnaton's name something seemed to stir in her face, but it immediately grew dead and stony again

Tuta went away grieved he felt that Dio, the dancer, the pearl of the Kingdom of the Seas, his wonderful gift to the king of Egypt, was lost to him

At dusk Tamu came and knocked at the back-door Zenra opened, but did not let him in, she went to ask Dio's permission first

"No, no, don't let him in!" Dio cried, seeming frightened But as Zenra was leaving the room she called her back

"Wait, nurse "

And after thinking a little, she said

"Let him in"

She was afraid to see him after the Mountain, but through her fear she vaguely felt that she needed him now more than anyone, that from him she might perhaps learn what she had to do in order to die in peace

Tamu came in, and without greeting her or saying anything, stopped at some distance from her Dio too said nothing They had not seen each other since that time on the Mountain They looked at each other intently and searchingly

"Good evening, Tamu," she said at last
"Why are you standing? Sit down"

He came forward and sat down on the chair that was farthest away

"Well, tell me what you have come for?"

"To say good-bye I am going away to-morrow"

"Are you really? This is not the first time"

"No, I could never make up my mind But now I can"

"Why now?"

"May I tell you everything?"

"Yes, do"

"You are very ill, Dio, one cannot tell everything to an invalid "

"Yes, tell me all "

"And may I speak about her too ?"

"Yes, about her too "

She understood that "about her" meant about Eoia

They both spoke with apparent calm, and the more terrible what they said was, the calmer they were, they weighed every word, feeling that it might save them or ruin them

"Do you know who killed Eoia ?" he asked, looking straight into her eyes

"Who ?"

"I Don't you believe it ?"

"No "

"Look me in the eyes One does not tell lies like this "

She looked, covered her face with her hands, sank on the couch, and for several minutes lay still like one dead Then she uncovered her face, sat up and asked him

"How did you ?"

She could not bring out the words "kill her "

"I did not do it myself, others did it," he said

"Who ?"

"It does not matter Somebody asked me, 'Shall I kill her ?' and I said, 'Yes, kill her !' So it was my doing "

"Kinir?" she guessed "How did he do it?"

"He bribed the attendants to make the bull drunk"

"Why did you ?" Again she could not finish

"To break the spell The murderer said to me that if Eoia died you would be under her spell no longer and would love me"

"And you believed it?"

"I don't know Perhaps I did"

"And now?"

"Now I see that it has turned out differently, you haven't fallen in love with me, but I have ceased to love you But anyway the spell is broken"

"And did you know that if you killed her you would kill me too?"

"I never thought of that And even if I had thought, I should still have had to choose between killing myself or killing you So I have chosen "

He stopped, pondered his words and went on

"I have chosen you Do understand, Dio, I have not come to ask your forgiveness I know you cannot forgive me Three times you have forgiven me the first time in the cave when I wanted to dishonour you, the second on the seashore when you were bathing with Eoia, and the third on the Mountain when you were

dancing with the Thyades. The fourth time you will not forgive me This is what I killed her for, that you could not forgive me ”

“Why have you come, then?”

“That you should know everything and not lie If you don’t love—hate, but don’t forgive, don’t lie!”

Dio did not answer at once, she seemed plunged in thought once more

“No, Tamu,” she said at last, in a hardly audible whisper “You have not ceased to love me You would not have come if you had”

“I don’t know Perhaps I would not” He too seemed to be thinking “But I shall go away to-morrow and I shall never come back again I was dead and now I am alive, I was perishing and now I am saved, I was chained like a dog and I have broken my chain—I am free, free, free! And if I had to kill again, I would ”

“No, Tamu, we shall never ” she began and stopped, and then, pondering her words as he did, finished

“We shall never cease loving each other!”

These words were so absurd, so impossible, so like “twice two is five,” that he did not believe his ears

It was getting dusk He was hardly able to see her face Suddenly he seemed to hear that she was weeping quietly and saying in a whisper

“Tamu, come here!”

She did not know herself what had come over her, it seemed as though it were not she but someone else who cried out in her heart, "Mother, help!" but suddenly some strong arms picked her up, as a mother's arms pick up a child. The choking knot in her throat—the spasm of weeping without tears—relaxed and tears came in a flood.

"Tamu, come here!"

He came up to her

"Bend down, still lower, like this "

She rose, put both arms round his neck and kissed him on the forehead without speaking. When she released her hold he drew back staggering, leaned his head against one of the pillars of the hearth, and so they both stood without moving. Then he turned to her and asked, with his usual heavy stonelike smile,

"What does this mean? 'Repay him who has done you evil by good,' is that it?" He remembered the words of the god Tammuz, inscribed in wedge-shaped characters on a clay tablet of immemorial antiquity.

"Yes, my brother, that's it! 'Repay him who has done you evil by good!'" she repeated with quiet ecstasy. "Who said that?"

He suddenly ceased smiling, turned pale, and clenching his fists raised them above his head.

"He through whom the world is perishing—the liar, the murderer, the devil, curse Him!"

"Tamu, my brother, why do you curse Him whom you love?"

"I love Him?"

"You do. Didn't you know? Wait, you will soon know."

She sank down on the couch and whispered faintly, as though half-asleep.

"Well, go now and I shall rest. I am very tired. Don't go away to-morrow—wait. If I live I will tell you what you must do, and if I die you will find out for yourself. Will you wait?"

He made no answer, but moving slowly, heavily, awkwardly, his back bent as though a weight had fallen upon it, left the room.

His face looked so terrible that, seeing him, Zenia ran to see what had happened. She peeped into Dio's room, went in on tiptoe, stole up to the couch and, bending over it, saw that Dio was fast asleep.

She was dreaming that she and Tamu were walking along an overgrown path in the dense forest on Mount Ida as on the day when he saved her from the boar. The pines were murmuring like the sea, wet snow was falling, almond-blossom was pink under the snow in the gathering dusk. "God must be slain, God must be slain—this is what must be done," Tamu said to her. And the flakes of snow fell faster and faster, a snowstorm whirled round them like the coils of an inextricable Labyrinth.

in which the god-beast was bellowing with a hungry roar "The beast must be slain, the beast must be slain—this is what must be done," said somebody else, not Tamu "Who was it? Who?" And all at once she knew the king of Egypt, Akhnaton

She woke up, but the dream seemed to go on She heard the hungry bellowing of the beast—the roar of the subterranean thunder The walls of the house shook as with an enormous stone-laden cart driving past, the brass shield on the wall clanged, two bronze vases that stood side by side—libation vessels in the chapel—jingled against each other, the hearth pillars creaked, plaster fell off the ceiling somewhere, a dog howled in the yard, sheep bleated in the stable, and the blackness of night breathed black terror into her face

But she was not terrified she was used to this subterranean thunder from childhood, she merely sat up on her couch, turned to the chapel and whispered

"Save, defend and have mercy upon all Thy children, O Mother!"

She was waiting to see how it would end As all the Kaeratians she knew what had happened four centuries before then the earth shook so violently that men thought the end of the world had come, "You will all sink into the abyss one day!"

"Is it the end or not?" She waited calmly

The stone-laden cart drove past once again—the thunder rolled, but fainter and fainter and was heard no more All was still A cock crew in the distance "It is not the end yet!"

Dio lay down again and dropped fast asleep as before

The sun was already falling in rainbow patches on the wall when she woke up, still weak and ill, but different something had changed in her face so that, glancing at her, Zenra thought, "She will live"

"Nurse, bring me bread and milk! Make haste, I am desperately hungry!"

She drank two cups of milk and ate two slices of bread with wolfish greediness She knew from her experience as priestess that after a long fast one must not eat much at once, but must first get accustomed to food She was doing it gradually, increasing her allowance of food from breakfast to dinner and from dinner to supper The nurse was cooking dish after dish—gruels, custards, broths, stewed fruit, dough-cakes, the old woman bustled about, beside herself with joy, the rusty-black plaits of her wig waving about as though she were drunk, and she hummed the crocodile song, "Paparuka-papaiaka "

Dio was recovering with marvellous rapidity, rising from the dead as it were But the old

nurse's love was sharp-sighted looking at Dio she vaguely felt that all was not well A dark shadow crossed Dio's face at times, there was a gleam in her eyes as of some frenzied thought

"What is she thinking about?" Zenra tried to understand but could not, and only feared with a prophetic fear, without herself knowing what she dreaded

"The beast must be slain, the beast must be slain—this is what must be done!" Dio recalled her dream and also Eoia's words, "If God is what men take him to be, he is not God but devil!" Men have so mixed up God and the devil that there is no disentangling the knot—it must be cut "Father is love" the Father sacrifices not men to his Son, but his Son to men—this is what must be said, to clear the earth from the blood of human sacrifices, to prepare the way for Him who is to come—this is what must be done

Akhnaton the prophet said it, and Dio the priestess will do it

II

THE Knossos aïena was asleep under the spell
of the Moon, Pasiphae the Light-giving

There was a smell of bulls' stables and warm
manure in the wooden cell, dark and narrow as
a coffin, where Dio had once dressed in the
bridal apparel Eoia, the bride of the god-Bull

A moonbeam falling through a narrow chink-
like window looked like a white rag hanging on
the black wooden wall, and in its white light the
flame of a sanctuary-lamp seemed red

Dio, in her dancing-dress — a leather apron
made of wedge-shaped lobes, a padded belt of
leather and bronze that tightly clasped her
body bare to the waist, with cross-gartered boots
of white leather on her feet, was squatting on
the floor sharpening the bronze sacrificial-knife,
long and thin as a willow leaf, such knives
indeed were called "willow leaves" Its handle
of black agate was made in the shape of a cross
With a faint jingle the blade glided to and fro,
hissing like a snake, on the damp and dark
grindstone Dio tried the knife on the leather
of her apron, it was sharp as a razor and yet it
seemed to her blunt She went on sharpening it

She heard a low bellowing behind the wooden
partition She got up, opened the window,
leaned over it and peeped into the stable,

lighting it with the lamp she held in her outstretched hand The smell of bull, of warm manure, was stronger than ever—the breath, as it were, of the god-beast himself, the Minotaurus

The bull was lying on the straw asleep, he faintly bellowed from time to time, dreaming perhaps of the honey-sweet meadows, the icy-cold streams of Mount Ida where he had grazed once with his brothers, heavily massive, huge horned, monstrously beautiful, the first-fruits of creation, the godlike sons of Mother Earth

It was the first time after Eoia's death that Dio had seen the Foam She bore him no malice, she understood that the animal was innocent, and yet she thought, "Her body was tossed about like a blood-stained rag on these very horns"

Her hand trembled, the lamp tilted on one side, and a drop of hot oil from it fell on to the bull's back He woke up, jumped to his feet and turned towards her She had often taken him a piece of thickly-salted wheaten bread or a honey-cake to eat He must have remembered this now Coming up to the window he stretched his head towards her, snorted, and she felt his warm breath upon her face as he looked straight into her eyes

"He knows everything, only he cannot tell" She recalled Eoia's words Oh, this gentle look

in an animal's eyes still divinely pure as on the first day of creation! She could not endure it, and, shutting the window, turned quickly, as though someone had called her, towards a small altar of clay adorned with bulls' horns, where saffron and incense were burning. On the whitewashed wall behind it was a painting intentionally crude, after a pattern of immemorial antiquity this was perhaps how the savage cave-dwellers drew with a sharp flint on the bones of rhinoceroses and mammoths.

Mother of Earth, Queen of Animals A childish face, the shape of a heart or of a vine-leaf, outstretched arms immeasurably long, symbolic of omnipresent goodness, around her little angular crosses The Mother was blessing with the sign of the cross all the creatures of the earth, the air and the water birds were perching on her arms, beasts were rubbing themselves against her legs, fishes were swimming in the pleats of her robe, as in flowing water, and a bull thrust its head right under her arm stretched out to bless.

"The Foam, the Foam!" thought Dio—not the ferocious god-Bull Minotaurus, but the gentle Bull of sacrifice slain before the foundation of the world—the Son.

"What am I doing? For whom do I grind the knife?" she thought, horrified. But it was too late a power stronger than horror urged her on.

irresistibly Not she but somebody else seemed to be deciding for her what she was to do

All her movements were light, firm, rhythmical and harmonious as in a dance "I shall dance as I have never danced before!"

The second cocks crew There was less than an hour left before the night-watch would come round Everything had to be finished before then

She bent down quickly, seized the knife which lay on the grindstone and thrust it into the sheath at her belt She took two torches she had prepared beforehand, and lighted one of them from the sanctuary-lamp She came out of the cell into the dark and narrow passage between the bulls' stables, from it into another and a third The passages turned and twisted as in a labyrinth There was not a soul anywhere, only in the passage by the door an old watchman was sleeping on the floor, dead drunk Half of the watchmen and attendants got drunk at supper Dio had sent them a jug of wine mixed with a sleeping-draught

Stepping over the sleeper she came into the wide, low vestibule supported by low pillars of cypress-wood The dummy heifer in which Eoia, the bride of the god-Bull, had once spent a night stood here under a grey cover, looking like a phantom Dio drew the bolts of the doors, stuck the lighted torch into the bronze stand on the wall and, with the other torch unlighted, went

to a wooden ladder leading to the haylofts and granaries, where fodder and straw for the bulls' stables were kept. She climbed up. The unlighted torch in her hands had a long rope twisted round it, tied to it by one end. Untwisting it, she let the free end hang down and thrust the torch into a bundle of straw. Then she came down, carried the ladder away, hid it in a dark corner under the dummy of the heifer, and, taking the lighted torch from the stand, set fire to the hanging end of the rope.

Permeated with resin, sulphur and other inflammable material, the rope smouldered like tinder. Such incendiary devices—an invention of the cunning Daedals—were used in besieging fortresses and in naval battles from the length of the rope it was possible to calculate the exact moment of the conflagration.

When the torch in the straw flared up, the fire would begin in the haylofts and granaries, spread from there to other wooden parts of the building—ceilings, rafters, staircases, pillars, and the whole great arena of Knossos—the den of the Beast would be destroyed by the flames.

She went from the vestibule on to the arena. Her bare shoulders shuddered with the autumnal freshness of the night. The full moon was almost dazzling in the clear starless sky. The white sand of the arena glistened with blue sparks like snow. The white rows of seats, one above

the other, were empty, and only the dark passages seemed crowded with the shadows of the eager phantom spectators. The king's tent gaped like a black hole and high above it glistened the silver bull's head.

Dio came up to the gate of the Foam's stable. The grating was so arranged that one person could lift it easily by turning the wheel, round which a bronze chain was twisted. Dio lifted the gate.

The bull jumped out of the stable, ran to the middle of the arena, stopped, and, bellowing softly, raised his head to the moon—Pasiphae the Light-giving. With his small finely-modelled head, huge horns curved like the sides of a lyre, hanging folds of skin on the enormously thick neck, slender, well-chiselled legs and transparently yellow intelligent eyes, his skin white as the sea-foam and glistening like silver in the moonlight, he was as beautiful as the divine Bull, Pasiphae's lover, that came out of the blue sea with the white foam of the roaring waves.

He turned towards Dio and approached her slowly, his horns set as though he meant to gore her, but, drawing near, he stopped, and when she seized his horns with both hands he tossed up his head, ferociously in appearance, but in truth playfully and caressingly, lifted her on to his back and rushed along, dancing with her as though proud of his beautiful rider, thus the god-Bull, white as the foam of the roaring

waves, rushed once through the blue sea with the goddess Europa on his back

Dio took out the knife from the sheath, meaning to strike him and could not She saw the cross on the handle and remembered the little crosses of the Mother, blessing all creatures Once more, not she, but somebody else, decided for her what she was to do she could not lift her hand against a gentle animal—perhaps she could raise it against a ferocious one

She had thrown down the torch and it went on burning on the sand, like a red wound in the white moonlit body of the night She jumped off the bull, ran up to the torch, picked it up, and when the bull came towards her again she thrust the burning torch between his horns, so that it caught on them The bull reeled back, bellowing and frantically shaking his head to throw off the fiery crown But he could not do so at once and only fanned the flames, sparks rained upon him, drops of burning pitch scorched his hair as they fell At last he shook it off, rose on his hind-legs and attacked her furiously he was not playing now

Dio darted aside, and the bull's horns, just missing her, went into the ground with such force that they were buried in it, and the animal, falling on its fore-legs, was dazed and could not lift its head at once

At the same instant Dio rushed up to it, put

her knee on its neck and thrust the knife between the backbone and the left shoulder-blade, aiming at the bull's heart

If a mother killing her child in a fit of madness suddenly came to her senses when the knife had already gone in, she would experience the same feeling as Dio had at that moment

With a dull roar, resembling a human moan, the bull raised his head, threw off the dancer so that she fell on her back, leapt up and bounded forward, staggered and crashed down. With his head on the sand he choked and struggled like a wounded bird. Dio ran up to him again, pulled out her knife, and, resting on one knee, struck the blade so deeply into his throat that her hand holding the cross-shaped handle was hidden by the soft folds of the skin. Blood squirted into her face. She turned away and closed her eyes so as not to see.

When she recovered she saw the lifeless beast at her feet and clouds of grey smoke, streaked with red flames, pouring in from the vestibule. The hangings of the king's tent caught fire, a pillar of flame rose up into the air—the crimson glow was reflected in the sky and the face of the moon turned pale.

The roar of the sacred trumpet—a triton's shell—signal of distress, resounded, and many-voiced echoes rolled like the bellowing of bulls through the whole palace, the Labyrinth.

Shadows black against the white background
of the benches scurried to and fro like ants
People rushed about in terror, striking them-
selves on the breast and on the head, tearing
their hair, weeping and sobbing

“Aui Adun! Aui Adun!”

They pointed with their fingers at the deicide
from a distance, but did not dare to approach
her. Some came down into the circular arena,
took two or three steps forward, but suddenly
stopped and ran back with a cry of unearthly
terror

“Laran-Lasa! Laran-Lasa!”

This was the name of a terrible evil spirit
capable of assuming various shapes. Dio under-
stood that people took her for an evil spirit
because they did not believe that a human being
could commit so dreadful a crime

At last the mistress of the games, Mothei
Anahita, came up to her, surrounded by the
other priestesses. She was holding high the
bronze axe Labra, and repeating an incantation

“Holy Labra against the evil power! Wherever
you may have come from, whether from
fire, water, earth or air, perish, begone, unclean
spirit!”

She said the incantation for the sake of the
others—she herself knew that she had a human
being before her and not a spirit. And the others,
seeing that Dio did not vanish at the sight of

the Labra, also grew bolder, came nearer and surrounded her, brandishing fists, knives and sticks

"To the stake, to the stake with the accursed!"

But at a sign from the priestess they stopped shouting and drew back

Mother Anahita came close to her and said

"What have you done? What have you done, you mad creature?"

But looking into her pale blood-stained face she suddenly understood and stopped speaking She took her hand and clasped it, not letting go when she felt that it was sticky with blood, but pressing it all the more warmly Her kind and intelligent face trembled, and with a sob she whispered into her ear

"What have you done to yourself, you poor, poor thing? Did you want to avenge Eoia?"

"Yes, her and all the others," Dio answered calmly, the more terrified the others were the calmer was she

"The blood of human victims is an abomination in the sight of God" she began She wanted to say "Father is love," but she felt that the words would sound dull and hollow This was what she was dying for—to say these words, but now she was dumb and knew that she would die in dumbness

As though guessing her thought, Mother Anahita hopelessly shook her head

"They will never understand! You will die
and will have done nothing"

"I am ready to die for Him!"

"Whom do you mean?"

"Him who is to come"

"He who had to come, is come already"

"No, He will come"

"Is it He who told you to do this?"

"Yes, He"

The priestess looked at Dio intently for a few seconds and suddenly let go her hand. She said nothing, but Dio understood "Mind you are not mistaken if He has come already, it is right that you should die at the stake."

"To the stake, to the stake! Destroy the criminal, she is not fit to live!" The crowd assailed her again with threats and shouts.

Somebody took the trouble to bring from the guards' room a pair of brass manacles with chains and gave them to Anahita. Dio put out her hands, and the venerable priestess fastened the manacles round them. The chains clanked.

Dio raised her arms to heaven, and in the sudden stillness cried aloud with such joy in her face as though she already saw Him whom she called

"Come! Come! Come!"

III

Dio was waiting for her sentence No one except the great priestess Akakalla could pronounce it, but she lay ill, almost dying, in the holy convent of the Bees on the Mountain

The Bees did not know how to tell her the dreadful news, but it could not be concealed When Akakalla heard of the crime committed by Dio, her favourite daughter that was to be her successor, they thought she would not survive it She lived, but lost the use of her tongue and half of her body became paralysed

She lay for a long time like one dead, at last she showed by signs that she wanted to write They gave her a tablet She scratched something on it with a failing hand

A messenger took the letter to Dio It contained only six words "Forgive and you shall be forgiven"

Dio understood "Forgive to the Great Mother the blood of Iolus, Ephra, Eoia, the blood of all human victims, and the Mother will have mercy on you and forgive you"

On the same tablet Dio wrote her answer "I don't forgive," and the messenger took the letter back

Mother Akakalla read the answer and wrote under it, "Burn her"

This happened in the morning and in the night the last struggle with death began One of the Bees, guessing from her expression and the convulsive movements of her fingers that the dying woman wanted to write something more, put a tablet under her hand and placed a reed between her fingers But the fingers relaxed helplessly and the tablet dropped on the floor

Towards morning the great priestess died and the secret of her last will—Dio's pardon perhaps—was buried with her

Dio was to be burned on the same hill where ten days before Eoia's body had been burned

A small cave—Adun's chapel—cut in the rock served as a prison for the victims Bare walls, low vaults, a thick grating in the window, rusty bolts on the door, were suggestive of prison But in the cave stood a magnificent couch decked with royal purple, ebony chairs inlaid with ivory The fragrant smoke of the braziers mingled with the dewy freshness of lilies in beautifully-painted vases Food and wine from the king's table, gorgeous dresses and ornaments of precious stones were offered to the victim just as the victim was offered to God And it seemed to Dio a bitter mockery to have slippers of peacocks' feathers, a box of onyx with rosy pearls pounded to dust—the face-powder used by Babylonian queens and harlots, a box of nephrite with acacia charcoal and

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ambergris—Egyptian tooth-powder a thousand years before king Chufu-Cheops, the builder of the Great Pyramid, had cleaned his teeth with it

People did their utmost to please her, to pamper her They looked upon her with reverence and fear, they fell on their faces and worshipped her like God, for the slain God is in every victim that is slain

This worship oppressed her it was as though they were burying her alive, killing the soul before the body She would have been less miserable if they had beaten her, insulted her, spat in her face

Cretan women did not consent to act as executioners of human victims, and this office was filled by a Thracian woman from the northern tribe of the Bessians, worshippers of the ferocious god Zagreus, the Slayer of men Her name suggested the cry of a bird of prey—*Gla* She was called, too, the Slaughteress, because she slaughtered the victims, and Torn Nostrils, because for some terrible crime committed by her in her native country she had had her nostrils pinched off with pincers by the hangman

Gla was an old woman, but she was strong Her hair was of a colour never seen in the south—a straw-yellow, her pale blue eyes were despondent and greedy like the eyes of a vulture,

her thin, bluish, moist lips resembled earth-worms, the terribly snub-nosed face was like a death's head

Winter and summer she wore a Thracian *bassara*, a coat of unlined fox-fur, shabby and sour-smelling, and carried in a sheath at her leather belt a sacrificial flint knife, long and sharp as an awl. She was always slightly drunk, not with wine, but with some mysterious corn liquor, transparent like water and burning like fire.

It was said that she was particularly fond of killing little children, and that, if there had been no child victims for some time, she stole babies and cut their throats to suck their blood.

The people hated her so much that they would have torn her to pieces were she not protected by the guards of the great priestess, who favoured her and considered her as a faithful servant of the Mother. When Dio asked Mother Akakalla one day why she tolerated this odious creature, the great priestess answered

"Do not revile Gla. A pure lily is the daughter of the Mother Earth, but a stinking carcass is her daughter, too. The Earth gives birth and the Earth corrupts. The mother has two sayings 'I love—I kill', and two faces—one is like the sun and the other is Gla."

Dio was horrified at this blasphemy, but forgave it at the time, thinking she did not

understand Now she understood and could no longer forgive

Gla was jailer as well as executioner She could go into the prisoner's cell at any time of day or night

She came in quietly, and, standing at a distance, looked at Dio in silence with intent, eager eyes, as though she were in love with her The terribly snub-nosed face—the death's head—smiled, the pale blue eyes shone with an odious tenderness, the thin lips—the earth-worms—moved, whispering something inaudibly—perhaps those very words “I love—I kill”

There were moments when Dio thought that Mother Anahita was right “You will die and will have done nothing” Yes, she was dying without having done anything She wanted to cut the knot in which God was entangled with the devil, but she could not, and only became entangled herself She did not know whom she had killed—God or the beast, and she would not know to the end She was saying to someone “Come” But who was He? He had no face, no image, no name And how would He come—whence, when? And would He ever come? What were the tokens of this coming? Was not everything as it had been from the beginning of the world, and would not everything remain as it was till the end?

And her heart was chilled with terror “He

will not come"—the terror of madness for it would mean madness to believe that the Mother was Gla

IV

REJOICE O Virgin pure
Prepare the marriage bed!
The wrath of heavenly angel
Aveited be by love!

sang the priestesses of Adun as they led Dio to the stake Like Eoia before her, she was dressed in white and wore a wreath of white saffron-flowers

By dark and narrow stairs, cut in the rock, they reached the wide outer stairway, bathed in moonlight It led from the Lion Gate to the flat top of the hill where the altar for human sacrifice was built

The moon shone with an almost dazzling brilliance in the clear starless sky The outline of Mount Kaeratos, bluish in the moonlit mist, resembled the face of a giant—the dead god Adun In the black ring of cypress-groves the city-palace of white stone, the dwelling of the god-Bull—the Labyrinth—gleamed with a bluish whiteness Down below, at the foot of the hill, the Knossos harbour looked black with its forest of ships' masts and thickets of tackle, and

to the very rim of the sky the silver pathway made by the moon glittered in the sea

Dio eagerly looked at the sea, eagerly breathed its salty freshness, and she was sorry to part with the sea, the sky, the earth, the sun, which she would never see again, sorry for all the poor earthly life Her heart was weeping within her for it all, as a child weeps when taken away from its mother's breast

The procession slowly walked up the stairs, lighted by the red glow of the torches and the white radiance of the moon The black throng of human heads stirred with a subdued noise outside the holy enclosure—no one was allowed within All of a sudden the crowd caught sight of the procession and shouted frantically

"Rejoice! Rejoice!"

The shouts of the crowd mingled with the bellowing of trumpets—tritons' shells—the squealing of flutes, the clanging of cymbals and the singing of the priestesses

Rejoice O Virgin pure,
Prepare the marriage bed!"

Upon the stone altar, with a deep hole underneath it, a low pyre was made of very dry and resinous fir, cedar and cypress logs, with a lot of sticks, hemp and wool soaked in fragrant resin and a special solution of inflammable substances, if the pyre were lighted at any one spot it would immediately flare up like a gigantic torch

The priestesses brought the victim to the stake and stripped her Then they brought and placed at her feet a large cross made of two planks nailed together Gla approached her and said
“Lie down”

Dio knelt down, but she did not know how she was to lie Gla pushed her on to her back, put the cross under her, pulled her legs straight, stretched out her arms she tied her feet to the lower end of the vertical plank and her hands to both ends of the transverse one, she twisted the rope round Dio’s waist and, putting it through the four corners of the cross, tied it in a knot behind her

Twelve priestesses, three at each end, lifted the cross and put it on the pyre

“So this is the meaning of the Cross,” Dio thought

She knew that the pyre would be lighted not at once but with the first ray of the rising sun She reckoned by the moon that there were some three hours left till sunrise

For three hours—three eternities—her heart was rent in two, and she did not know which of the two halves was real She seemed to be swinging on a gigantic swing, now flying up, now falling down, and she did not know which movement would be the last “He will come—He will not come!”

The night was fresh Someone had pity on

her and threw a goat-skin over her naked body
The tight ropes cut into the body like knives
Her arms and legs were numb Her temples
throbbed She was dizzy and sick with the
mawkish scent of the stupefying incense they
were burning in order to dull her pain

Dio remembered that one of the priestesses
had whispered in hei ear, as they were going up
the stairs "Don't be afraid, they won't burn
you alive" She understood they would cut her
throat before burning her And now she thought
"It is terrible to burn alive, but even this is
better than Gla's knife!"

Gla hovered over her like a vulture over a
corpse The terribly snub-nosed face—a death's
head—smiled, the pale blue eyes shone with an
odious tenderness, the thin lips—the earth-
worms—moved, whispering "I love—I kill!"
Now and again she placed the point of her flint
awl knife right on Dio's heart, pricked her
quietly, and when a drop of blood appeared
greedily licked it off

With a cry Dio came to herself There was
no one there, only the moonlit sky glimmered
above her, so distant and so near as never
before The black horror of madness was gain-
ing possession of her she was on the verge
of losing her reason and believing that the
Mother was Gla

And again she swung to and fro on the

dreadful swing, flying up and falling down
“He will come—He will not come!”

Suddenly she seemed to lose hold, to fall into the outer darkness “No, He will never, never, never come!” But from there too, from the outer darkness, she cried, “Come!”

And he came

The cross moved under her and was lifted
Someone was untying the ropes round her body
She did not yet see who it was, she dared not open her eyes But suddenly she opened them, saw and cried

“Tamu!”

V

SHE regained consciousness in Tuta's litter She recognised it by the hieroglyphics and the painting the sun disk of the god Aton with rays shaped like hands blessing the king of Egypt, Akhnaton The litter was standing on the ground, Zenra was wrapping up her body in the golden-yellow veil embroidered with silver bees Tamu, bending over her, was saying something She could not for a long time make out what it was, at last she understood She asked

“You saved me, Tamu?”

“No, not I, but He”

“Yes, He and you too How did you do it?”

“In the name of king Akhnaton, Tuta and I persuaded king Idomim to pardon you”

"King Idomin?" she asked in surprise, shaking her head "The king could not have done it Nobody could, except the great priestess"

"The great priestess is dead and no one has yet been elected in her place The king with his power could "

"No, he could not Why don't you tell me all? I want to know all"

"You will know it later, but now you must hurry Tuta is waiting in the harbour Make haste to get on board—to go to Egypt!"

"And you? What will become of you?" she asked

He was silent She sat up, laid both hands on his shoulders, brought her face close to his, gazed into his eyes—and suddenly she understood it all

She knew the law of the Mountain, a human victim could only be saved if another were offered in its place—body for body, soul for soul But this could not be done by a mother, or father, or brother, or sister, or husband, or wife—it had to be done by a stranger who loved so much that he was ready to die for the loved one The willing sacrifice of love was higher than all human sacrifices, "a sweet savour unto the Lord"

"Tamu, my brother, I know all you are dying for me!" she whispered, not taking her eyes off him

"Yes, for you and for Him," he answered simply "Do you remember how I cursed Him and you said to me, 'You will soon know that you love Him'? Well, I do know now"

"Repay him who has done you evil by good?" she whispered with quiet ecstasy and dread

"No, Dio, you have done me no evil. Blessed be the torments of my love for you! It is not I who repay you with good for evil, but you are doing it to me. Do you remember how, when I told you that I killed Eoia, you said to me in answer, 'We shall never cease loving each other'? Let me, then, let me die for you and for Him!"

He was crying. Suddenly he smiled through his tears "I am a merchant, I am good at counting, I know where gain is. It is better for me to die than to live. Life has parted us—death will unite us!"

"I cannot, I cannot, I cannot!" she moaned, wringing her hands "If my life means your death I cannot live, I don't want to live!"

"You don't want to? You called to Him 'Come,' and when He comes you don't want to receive Him? Dio, my sister, my beloved, don't you feel that He is here, between us now? It is not I who say it, but He this must be, so that He may come!"

The shouts of the crowd were heard again. While Dio was being taken off the cross, Gla ran in a fury outside the holy enclosure,

screaming that the god was robbed of the victim, and stirred up the people to mutiny

The chief of the guards ran up to the Nubian porters

"Make haste, make haste, men, to the harbour and on board the ship! She must not remain here another minute!"

Mother Anahita came up to Tamu

"My son, your hour has come God calls for sacrifice Are you ready?"

"I am ready," Tamu answered

The Nubians lifted the litter Dio stretched out her arms to Tamu He embraced her and she gave him such a kiss that afterwards, on the pyre, he remembered it and thought, "Yes, it is worth dying for!"

The litter moved away rapidly Tamu looked after it, and when he lost sight of it he turned to Mother Anahita and said

"Let us go!"

She placed on his head the wreath of white saffron-flowers that had been taken off Dio's and led him to the stake

He saw the cross at his feet As he undressed he felt on his breast the carnelian talisman with the inscription "*Ab-vad*," and whispered as he kissed it

"Father is love!"

And he lay down on the cross

VI

Dio came to herself on the ship. She was lying in Tutankhamon's painted and gilded deck cabin of sycamore-wood. In the dawning light of the day she saw on its walls the same design as in the litter—the sun disk of the god Aton with rays like hands holding looped crosses, Ankh, and blessing king Akhnaton. In her thoughts, vague as delirium, she connected these little crosses with the cross on which she had just been lying and on which Tamu now had gone to lie.

From the long sea-wall of the Knossos harbour, six ships put out to sea like a flock of swans—three Egyptian, two Cretan—the envoy's guard of honour—and Tammuzadad's ship, laden with iron—the gift he made before dying to the king of Egypt for saving Dio.

The sails hung down, for there was no wind. But the oars rose and fell with one accord, wet and sparkling like the fins of a sea-monster, and the ships moved rapidly, dragging behind them two bluish folds in the whiteness of the sea, almost as rosy and opalescent as the sky. The star of love, the star of the Youth-Maiden, Adun-Ma, white as the sun, shone in the morning sky. Mount Ida was still blue and nocturnal at the base, but its snow-clad summit was beginning to turn rosy.

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At the edge of the sky and the sea appeared a red-hot ember and became a disk of fire, the rays of the rising sun flooded the sky and the star of love died in their radiance

The morning wind filled the sails and the dark purple waves foamed and splashed under the prow of the ship

Engur, son of Nurdagan, the shepherd to whose song of weeping for Tammuz Dio had listened once, was on the same ship with her Zenra took him with them in remembrance of Tamu

He had heard from Zenra of his master's death, but he remained unmoved he was in his dotage

Suddenly the sailors on watch cried from the top of the mast

"The victim is burning!"

And he pointed to the clouds of smoke rising to the sky from the top of the hill above the Knossos harbour, where the altar of sacrifice was All looked in that direction

Tuta looked, too, and thought with a sigh of dejection "Poor merchant! What an intelligent man he was, and here he has perished for nothing!" And he decorously covered his eyes with his hand as though he were weeping But he soon comforted himself, remembering that this death had saved Dio the dancer, the pearl of the Kingdom of the Seas, his wonderful gift to the king of Egypt

Engur looked on for a few moments without understanding. Suddenly he understood and howled terribly, like a dog over a corpse.

At the sound of the howling Dio jumped up and looked out of the cabin window, saw the smoke and felt as though Gla's knife had pierced her heart. But she remembered "This must be, so that He may come"—and the knife hurt her less. She knew as she had never known before that He would come.

The experienced Cretan sailors prophesied that the voyage during the equinoctial gales would be dangerous. But Tuta no longer knew which was more dangerous, the sea or the land—he had been so scared by the subterranean thunder and by the fire at the Knossos amphitheatre. The fire was soon put out, but, being half-asleep, he imagined that the whole palace was in flames and nearly threw himself out of the window. And during the last few days a rumour had spread that hosts of Achaeans, Danaans, Dardans, Trojans, Pelasgians and other half-savage tribes were approaching the Kingdom of the Seas from the North. Sarpedomin, the exile, was leading them against king Idomin, brother against brother. Tuta remembered the prophecy "The Iron-men will come out of the night—and then there will be a night of iron, the end of all things!" He was only too anxious to get away from the accursed island.

King Utux-Odysseus took five days to sail from Crete to Egypt

On the seventh day went we aboard and we sailed from Crete land wide

And the fresh North wind blew fair and merrily swept us on Smoothly as down a stream of all my ships not one Got harm but all unscathed and un vexed sat we at our ease And the ships were unswervingly sped by the helmsman's hand and the breeze

On the fifth day came we to where fair Egypt's river flowed¹

Tuta's journey was very different from this

They had no sooner sailed round the last north-easterly promontory of the island, Bithomaitis Sammonion, when two opposing winds met and a storm began

Tuta's ship, built of the strongest oak and cedar, two-masted, well-rounded, easy to turn, with a long spur in front that cut the waves, and manned by fifty of the best Cretan rowers, withstood the storm best But Tuta lost heart so completely that he did not expect to be saved, and vowed to Amon-Aton that if he remained alive he would never venture into the Very-Green again

The storm raged for six days, neither the sun nor the stars were to be seen and the sailors did not know where they had drifted At last, on the seventh day, the storm abated and the shore of Canaan-Philistia came into sight

They called at the harbour of Gezer, but did

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not stay there long, for robber-bands of the Jews roamed in the neighbourhood At that time Joshua had already crossed the Jordan and taken Jerusalem, the city of God

Leaving Gezer they called at Ascalon, a safer harbour, guarded by a detachment of Egyptian soldiers Tuta's second ship came there, too, the third disappeared without a trace The two Cretan ones, as he heard later, were driven by the storm to the shore of Cyprus, and Tam-muzadad's ship, with the load of iron, was smashed on the submerged rocks by the Gazelle's head—Mount Carmel

They stayed for over a month at Ascalon, mending the ships and waiting for a favourable wind

The still halcyon days before the winter came at last, when the sea-god Velhanos smooths the waves with his tripod so that the seagulls can hatch out their young in their floating nests

Three days after leaving the harbour of Ascalon they saw Pharos As it says in the song of Odysseus

Now a certain island there is a wave engirdled strand —
On this side Egypt it lieth and Pharos its name men say—
From the mainland as far as a hollow galley might make in
a day

They did not call at the harbour, but sailed past, steering straight to the south

The day was grey It was raining slightly

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Warm, soft drops fell like tears The sea was smooth as a looking-glass and dull-green with the waters of the Nile

Sitting on a bundle of ropes in the prow, Dio listened to Engui's shepherd-pipe He was singing at the other end of the ship the song of weeping for the god Tammuz

The wail is raised for Tammuz far away
The mother goat and the kid are slain
The mother sheep and the lamb are slain
The wail is raised for the beloved Son'

Dio listened, and quiet tears rolled down her cheeks, and she did not herself know whether she was crying with grief or joy She was recalling the whole of her life, as one recalls a dream or as perhaps the dead recall their past existence—Iolus, Ephra, Eoia, Tamu—how many sacrifices! And what for? Now she knew what it was for that He might come Mother Earth, in the agony of childbirth—the agony of human souls—was giving birth to God

Suddenly, at the very edge of the sky, over the Very-Green, a streak of land appeared, yellow as though lit up by the sun

Dio asked the pilot
“What land is this?”
He answered
“Egypt!”

THE END

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